Hafa Adai!

Saipan Tribune

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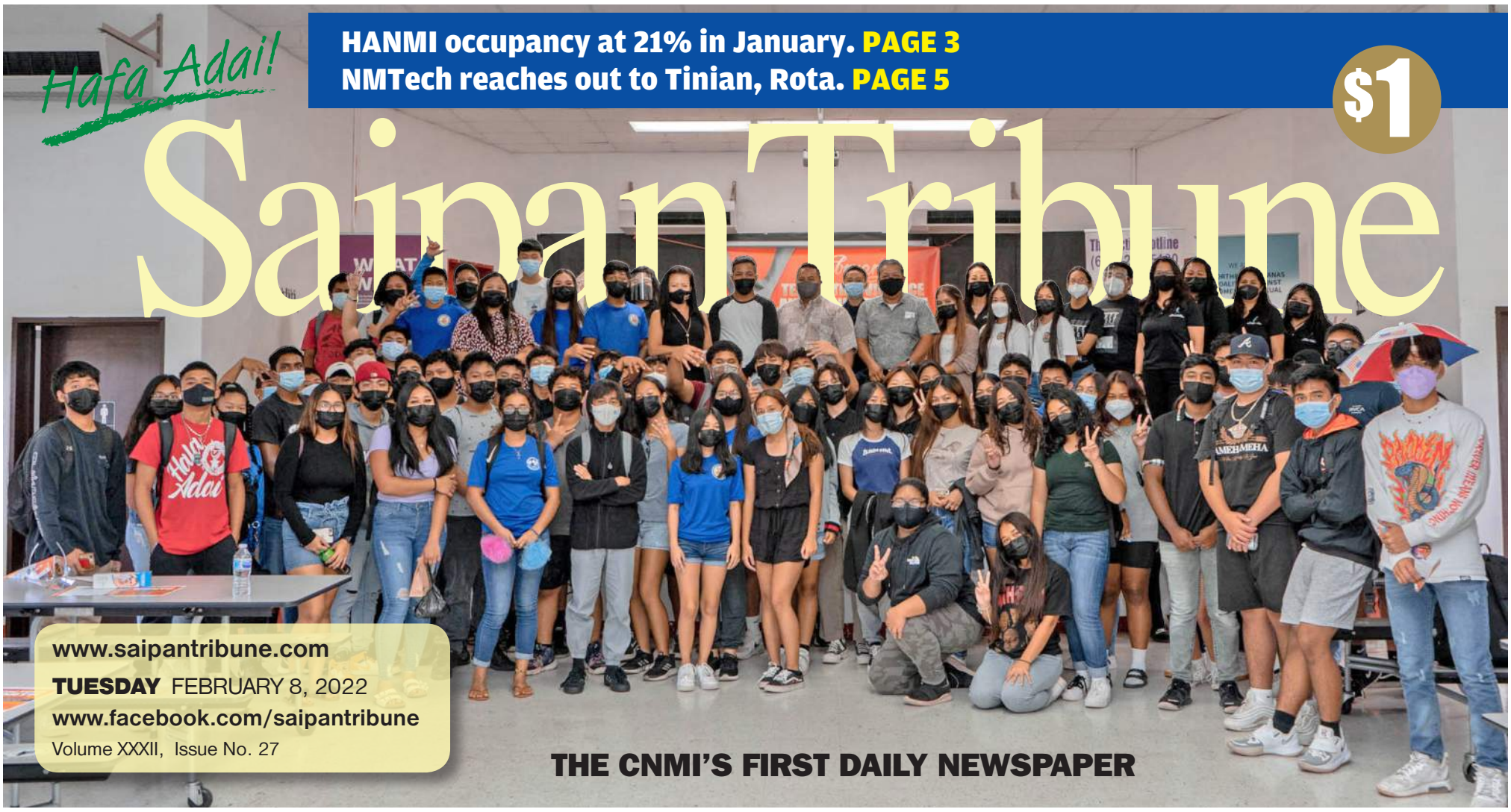
THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

HANMI occupancy at 21% in January. PAGE 3
NMTech reaches out to Tinian, Rota. PAGE 5



TEEN DATING VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Students and staff of the Tinian Jr./Sr. High School join Gov. Ralph DLG Torres, Tinian Mayor Edwin P. Aldan, and representatives of the Northern Marianas Coalition Against Domestic & Sexual Violence yesterday after Torres proclaimed the month of February as Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month in the CNMI.

Story on Page 2

211 new COVID-19 cases ID'd

In its sixth successive report of COVID-19 cases topping a hundred, the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. reported last night the identification of 211 new cases of COVID-19, bringing the CNMI total to 6,102 cases since March 26, 2020.

In Guam, its Joint Information Center was notified of two COVID-19-related fatalities, bringing the territory's death toll from COVID-19 to 298.

In the CNMI's latest cases, a total of 209 were identified on Feb. 5, 2022, and two were confirmed on Feb. 4, 2022. Of the 211 cases, 176 were identified via contact tracing, 30 via community testing, and five via travel testing. Five of the new cases were identified on Tinian, and five on Rota.

All 211 cases have been iso-

See 211 on Page 4

CNMI seeing rapid increase in case numbers

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
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REPORTER

After seeing a downward trend in the number of COVID-19 cases last month, as of late January the CNMI has started to see a rapid increase in case numbers again.

During a virtual press briefing with the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. last week, Stephanie Kern-Allely, regional communicable disease epidemiologist for the Pacific Island Health Officers Association, shared that the CNMI started to see a steady, rapid increase in its number of COVID-19 cases starting last week.

"Our general overall trend from when we first identified COVID-19 in the community back in October 2021 [is that] we saw a rise in cases toward the end of November

See CNMI on Page 4

Torres back from isolation

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Gov. Ralph DLG Torres started going to work yesterday after spending six days of home quarantine when he tested positive for COVID-19.

Torres told *Saipan Tribune* last night that he led the proclamation signing on Tinian, declaring February as Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month.

In a text message, the governor said he also met with Tinian Mayor Edwin P. Aldan and members of the Tinian Legislative Delegation regarding COVID-19.

He believes that having been vaccinated against COVID-19 is proof that it worked for him and others.

"No fever at all. Just a day of runny nose and coughing, but nothing major," said Tor-

See TORRES on Page 4

COMMUNITY VULNERABILITY

LEGEND:
- **Red:** Least safe
- **Orange**
- **Yellow**
- **Blue**
- **Green:** Safest

Source: Office of the Governor

AT A GLANCE

As of 6:52pm, Feb. 7, 2022

VACCINATIONS IN THE CNMI

Eligible Population Fully Vaccinated: **99.8%**

Days since last community transmission: **2**

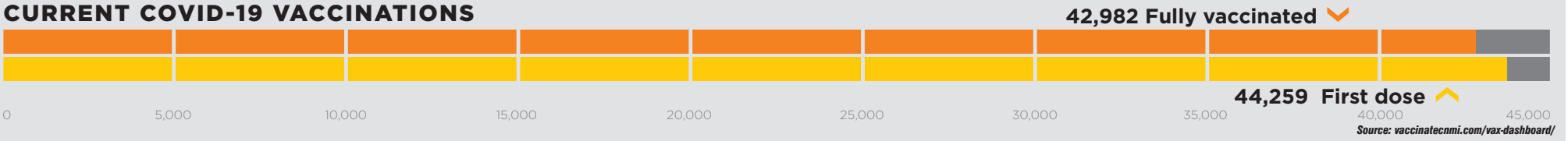
Pfizer/BioNTech	
Initiated:	37,806
Fully Vaccinated:	36,686
Moderna	
Initiated:	5,322
Fully Vaccinated:	5,165
Janssen	
Fully vaccinated:	1,131

GUAM	OLD	NEW	TOTAL
Positive	36,113	499	36,612
Recovered	28,332	2,260	30,592
Active	5,223	499	5,722
Deaths	296	2	298

SAIPAN	OLD	NEW	TOTAL
Positive	5,891	211	6,102
Traced via Travel Screening	603	5	608
Traced via Community Screening	5,288	206	5,494
Deaths	23	0	20

Source: Joint Information Center - Guam, Commonwealth Healthcare Corp., https://www.vaccinatecnmi.com/vax-dashboard/

CURRENT COVID-19 VACCINATIONS



Source: vaccinatecnmi.com/vax-dashboard/

INSIDE

BUSINESS
For all the perils of a workplace romance, the most common source of trouble is keeping it secret.

Page 11

NATION
White House security adviser Jake Sullivan said that Russia could invade Ukraine "any day."

Page 12

LIFE & STYLE
"Jackass Forever," the fourth movie in the anarchic series, has earned $23.5 million in ticket sales.

» PAGE x

SCAN ME WITH A COMPATIBLE QR READER TO KEEP UPDATED ON ALL THE LATEST NEWS.

Local

February is Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month

Gov. Ralph DLG Torres has designated the month of February as Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month during a proclamation signing yesterday at the Tinian Jr./Sr. High School that was attended by hundreds of the school's students.

In a ceremony that was also witnessed by Tinian Mayor Edwin P. Aldan, representatives of the Northern Marianas Coalition Against Domestic & Sexual Violence, and the school's officials and teachers, Torres encouraged everyone to take the opportunity to raise awareness about abuse in teen relationships and promote programs that prevent it. "Throughout February, organizations and individuals nationwide are urged to come together to bring attention to this issue, so that we may break the devastating cycle of dating violence. I call upon everyone to continue to educate young people about dating violence and to empower them to make healthy choices in relationships, so that our youth can live fulfilling lives free of violence and abuse," he said in the proclamation document.

As stated in the proclamation, teen dating violence is a pervasive yet underreported crime in the community that happens in person, online, and through technology.

"This form of intimate partner violence affects millions of teens every year. It is a pattern of behaviors involving the use or attempted use of abuse including physical violence, sexual violence, psychological aggression like emotional abuse or intimidation, and stalking of another person with whom they have or have had a teen dating relationship.

"Although dating violence can happen to anyone at any age, 26% of women and 15% of men who were victims of physical violence, sexual violence and/or stalking by an intimate partner first experienced these or other forms of violence before the age of 18. Nearly 1 in 11 female and 1 in 14 male high school students reported experiencing physical dating violence in 2019. Female high school students also reported experiencing sexual dating violence more than triple the rate of their male peers. In addition, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning youth are disproportionately affected by dating violence, as well as other forms of violence, compared to their straight and cisgender peers.

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Gov. Ralph DLG. Torres, center, signs the proclamation designating the month of February as Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month in CNMI, as Tinian Mayor Edwin P. Aldan, left, and Tinian Jr./Sr. High School principal Liz Hofschneider look on.

"The impact and trauma of teen dating violence can be immediate and can also have long lasting effects. For example, those who have experienced teen dating violence are at a higher risk for substance abuse, eating disorders, risky sexual behavior, and further domestic violence. Additionally, half of youth who have been victims of both dating violence and rape attempt suicide, compared to the 12.5% of non-abused girls and 5.4% of non-abused boys.

"Abusive behavior in dating relationships often start to happen infrequently and in subtle ways, as in monitoring interactions with other people, controlling physical appearance, and ignoring or violating personal boundaries. Teens may not realize the signs of teen dating violence, and that it is a serious crime, or they might not know how to seek help. Over time, the abusive behaviors can escalate in frequency and severity; this can be as severe as physical battering, extreme emotional abuse, rape, and even death.

"Despite how often this occurs, only 1 in 3 teens in abusive relationships ever tell anyone about it. Therefore, as adult allies, we have a duty not to ignore, downplay, remain silent on, or support attitudes and beliefs that allow violence and abuse to continue. It is crucial that we work to raise awareness and empower teens with tools to help themselves and their peers in abusive relationships. We must also lead by example in our own lives from making healthy choices to promoting acceptance of LGBTQ+ youth to talking more openly about mental health.

"Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month is a national effort to raise awareness about abuse in teen relationships and promote programs that prevent it. Throughout February, organizations and individuals nationwide are urged to come together to bring attention to the significant need to continue to educate young people about dating violence and to empower them to make healthy choices in relationships in order to break the devastating cycle of abuse." the proclamation states. ***(Saipan Tribune)***

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COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Water outage in China Town, Upper MIHA, Sugar King Estate

There will be a scheduled water service interruption on Thursday, Feb. 10, 2022, from 8am to 4pm, for Commonwealth Utilities Corp. customers in China Town, Upper MIHA, and Sugar King Estate.

The purpose of the water service interruption is to allow RNV Construction, the contractor for the China Town Waterline Replacement project, to connect the new water main to the existing waterline at the corner of Chalan Pale Arnold and Sugar King Rd. (traffic light area next to the former Hollywood Video Rental Shop).

This project is funded through a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

For more information, contact the CUC Customer Call Center (664-4282) or monitor our Facebook page for the latest updates. ***(PR)***

Registration open for vessels seeking Safe Haven at Smiling Cove

Registration of vessels seeking safe haven at the Smiling Cove Marina during a typhoon season is now open. The application period is Jan. 1, and will close on March. 31, 2022, at 4:30pm.

The Department of Lands & Natural Resources, Division of Fish and Wildlife, Smiling Cove Marina Office Rules & Regulations Title 85: Department of Lands and Natural Resources Subchapter 85-30.2 – 330, Non-tenant Storm Condition Permit, Smiling Cove Marina Rules And Regulations is encouraging boat owners who wish to utilize the Smiling Cove Marina as a safe haven during a typhoon to apply for a Non-Tenant Storm Condition permit or renew their typhoon contingency permit at the Smiling Cove Marina Office.

The Smiling Cove Marina Office may be reached through telephone at (670) 323-6070 or by e-mail at dfwscm@gmail.com for more information or clarification. ***(PR)***

Registration now open for Xavier high entrance exam

All current eighth graders in the CNMI who are interested in attending Xavier High School–Micronesia are encouraged to take the official entrance exam at 9am on Saturday, Feb. 19, 2022, at the Maturana House of Prayer on Upper Navy Hill. Registration is mandatory for all exam-takers, and will close at 12am on Sunday, Feb. 13. To register, visit https://forms.gle/iRG3ER51heLUPoLd9.

For more information on Xavier High School–Micronesia, visit https://www.xaviermicronesia.org, or follow @XavierMicronesia on Facebook and/or Instagram. ***(PR)***

HANMI occupancy at 21% in January 2022

The Hotel Association of the Northern Mariana Islands reported a 22% average occupancy rate among its 12 member-hotels in January 2022, compared to the 6% average occupancy in January 2021.

"January occupancy rates are a sharp drop from 35% average occupancy in December, and this is due to the omicron variant, which created a lot of uncertainty among travelers and caused a large number of booking cancellations and hesitancy to travel," said newly elected HANMI chair Ivan Quichocho. "The good news is [that] February and beyond is looking considerably stronger for the Marianas. Barring no unforeseen plot twists from COVID, we are looking for continued incremental growth for the year. HANMI members currently have about 1,400 rooms open, and we are anticipating to open another 900 rooms over the next four months. "

A total of 9,715 of 45,639 available room nights sold during the month. Average room rates were $134.14 compared to $146.08 last January.

Hotels included in HANMI's monthly statistical report are Aqua Resort Club, Aquarius Beach Tower, Century Hotel, GrandVrio Resort Saipan, Fiesta Resort & Spa, Hyatt Regency Saipan, Kanoa Resort Saipan, Kensington Hotel Saipan, LaoLao Bay Golf & Resort, Saipan World Resort, Surfrider Resort Hotel, and Pacific Islands Club Saipan. The occupancy rates do not include venue rentals at Kanoa Resort Saipan for government COVID-19 quarantine accommodations.

HANMI was established in 1985 as a professional forum for the hospitality industry of the Marianas. HANMI also makes regular charitable donations to support non-profit organizations and tourism-related government projects. ***(PR)***

Manglona: Act on impeachment soon so we can go back to doing our homework

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

Sen. Paul A. Manglona (Ind-Rota) is urging his fellow senators to move on with the impeachment hearings of Gov. Ralph DLG Torres without delay, saying the sooner they put it behind them, the faster will they get back to doing their homework and take on the difficult task of passing a truly balanced budget for the government's operations.

Mangloña

At the Senate's session Thursday, Manglona underscored the need to have a balanced budget that fairly and reasonably allocates the resources of the CNMI government, including all American Rescue Plan Act funds.

"This is the only way we can avoid going to a place far worse than where we were prior to getting all the federal financial assistance," he said.

The senator said he is sure each of them are being pressured by the public to do something about Torres' alleged violations of government funds and public trust, as outlined in House Resolution 22-14.

H.R. 22-14 impeached Torres for alleged commission of felonies, corruption, and neglect of duty.

Torres has repeatedly stated that he has done anything illegal and that he has trust in the Senate's ability to conduct an impeachment trial with transparency, with proper decorum, and in accordance with a set of published rules.

At the end of the Senate session last Thursday, Senate president Jude U. Hofschneider (R-Tinian) requested the co-chairs of the two committees that are reviewing the impeachment resolution to come up with impeachment rules within 14 days.

Manglona asked his colleagues that they immediately entertain a resolution that he and Sen. Edith E. DeLeon Guerrero (D-Saipan) had introduced and prefiled last Jan. 18 that proposes to use the Impeachment Rules of Procedure that the 18th Senate had adopted in 2013 for the impeached then-governor Benigno R. Fitial.

He noted that under the 18th Senate impeachment rules, "a senator should not initiate, permit, or consider as ex-parte communications with House prosecutor and his or her staff, the governor and his counsel or staff of the governor or his counsel, or consider ex-parte communications or other communications made to the senator outside the presence of the parties concerning the impeachment pending before the Senate."

"This rule, along with the others, is crucial to ensure the integrity of the impeachment hearing process," Manglona said.

Ex-parte communication basically occurs when a party or someone involved with a party talks or writes a letter directly outside the presence of the other party.

'Finance, OAG obviously not paying attention to collecting $400K from M/V Luta ex-owners'

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Sen. Edith E. DeLeon Guerrero (D-Saipan) is wondering why the Department of Finance and the Office of the Attorney General have not collected a single penny out of the $400,000 that the former owners of M/V *Luta* have agreed to pay as part of a settlement agreement in 2019.

At a Senate session Thursday, DeLeon Guerrero said a collection could have been achieved had there been more due diligence taken to monitor the collection of these public funds.

"…It is quite obvious that no attention was given to outstanding CNMI public funds receivables," said the senator.

DeLeon Guerrero made the comment in response to Gov. Ralph DLG Torres' message to the Legislature last Dec. 29 about vetoing a Senate local bill that sought to earmark the $400,000 repayment by Luta Mermaid LLC and local poker fees in order to provide funds for the Rota Interisland Medical Referral patients, medical subsistence program, and Rota Municipal Scholarship.

Torres said that, according to Finance and OAG, although the defendants in the Luta Mermaid litigation have agreed to repay the settlement amount of $400,000, no payment has been made to the Commonwealth yet. The governor said the OAG has also informed him that an order to show cause motion will be filed shortly to enforce the settlement terms in the lawsuit.

DeLeon Guerrero

Torres found the earmarking of these funds to be "irresponsible" at the time since the funding is not readily available and there is no additional information offered by the Rota Legislative Delegation with regard to when the payments will be made.

The governor strongly encouraged the Rota Legislative Delegation to earmark and appropriate these funds for the Rota Interisland Medical Referral patients, medical subsistence program, and the Rota Municipal scholarship as soon as they become available.

DeLeon Guerrero said a news article came out back in August 2019 stating that a resolution has been reached with a consent judgment to recover the $400,000 in public funds that were advanced to Luta Mermaid LLC.

DeLeon Guerrero said the attorney general went on saying that "the settlement represents a victory for the people of the Commonwealth" and that with the resolution of the case, the CNMI will be able to look to their personal assets in the event the settlement agreement is breached.

Two years later, the senator said, another news article came out in August 2021, saying that the AG is waiting on Finance to see if any payment has been made before filing a motion with the court to enforce the consent judgment.

She said the AG also stated that $55,894 was agreed for the assignment of a salary as partial satisfaction of the judgment with an amortization of 48 months at 3% interest per annum.

DeLeon Guerrero said in January 2022 or three years from 2019, another article came out, this time about the governor's veto of Senate Local Bill 22-4.

Sen. Paul A. Manglona (Ind-Rota), who is the author of Senate Local Bill 22-4, said he knows Torres' reasoning for vetoing it, as the governor stated in his letter that he does not see any funding that is readily available. Manglona said that Torres said in the same breath that he has information that the AG will be filing an order to show cause for the former owners of M/V *Luta* to pay pursuant to the settlement agreement between the government and the former owners of the vessel.

"So I see a contradictory statement coming from the governor there," he said.

Manglona said he hopes to reintroduce the bill by putting a more definitive statement as to the funding. "And hopefully by then, the attorney general would have given us [more information on] what are his action," said Manglona.

The CNMI government sued the then-owners of cargo ship M/V *Luta* in 2017 for allegedly refusing to return the $400,000 in public funds that were loaned to them for the vessel's operations.

On July 23, 2019, the CNMI and Luta Mermaid LLC reached a settlement agreement in which the former owners of the vessel agreed a repayment plan for the $400,000.

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Habitual offender awaits hearing for removal proceedings

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

A man who was found guilty of vandalizing multiple government vehicles is currently waiting for a hearing date on whether he will be removed from the CNMI or not.

Zhang Shanguo, 44, is currently waiting for a hearing date on his pending U.S. immigration case. He is due for removal proceedings for overstaying his tourist visa.

While he waits for his hearing, the Superior Court has ordered him to perform 40 hours of community service for vandalizing a Department of Public Safety vehicle and a Commonwealth Ports Authority vehicle.

Aside from community service, Superior Court Associate Judge Joseph N. Camacho also ordered Zhang to pay a $250 fine.

Zhang was previously charged with vandalism and disturbing the peace after breaking a Ports Police office's car window on June 15, 2021. He has since been found guilty of vandalism, but he was acquitted of disturbing the peace.

In his sentencing and commitment order last week, Camacho stated that vandalism does not have any jail sentence, therefore he was ordered to pay a fine instead and perform community service.

However, because Zhang violated his probation in a previous case where he pleaded guilty to spray-painting a DPS K-9 vehicle, the court imposed three-month sentence on the defendant.

"Zhang still has two months of probation in that case, and is still under the supervision of the Office of Adult Probation," Camacho said in his order.

According to court documents, Zhang, a citizen of the People's Republic of China, is a habitual offender with most of his cases involving vandalism and disturbing the peace.

Zhang is one of those individuals who hold a daily protest against the Chinese Communist Party at the Civic Center across the judicial building in Susupe.

Back on June 15, 2021, Zhang allegedly destroyed or vandalized public property belonging to the Commonwealth Ports Authority Ports Police Department by breaking its vehicle window by striking the glass window with a rock.

Back in March, Camacho sentenced Zhang to serve six months in prison, with the first 15 days to be served day for day without the possibility of parole, early release, weekend release or other similar programs after the defendant pleaded guilty to tampering with a vehicle.

Camacho gave Zhang 12 days' credit for time served, but the defendant was also placed on a six-month probation after serving his sentence.

In July 2020, Zhang was arrested for criminal mischief and disturbing the peace after damaging the glass doors at the governor's office.

SAIPAN NATIVE U.S. NAVY/MCS3 ISAAK MARTINEZ

Culinary Specialist 3rd Class Kenth Cave, a native of Saipan in the Northern Mariana Islands, assigned to Wasp-class amphibious assault ship USS *Essex*, prepares food aboard *Essex*, Jan. 25, 2022. *Essex*, flagship of the Essex Amphibious Ready Group, along with the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit, is operating in the U.S. 7th Fleet area of operations to enhance interoperability with alliances and partners and serve as a ready response force to ensure maritime security and a free and open Indo-Pacific region.

Fire hits Chalan Kanoa house Saturday

On Saturday, Feb. 5, 2022, at approximately 1:19pm, a female caller called 911 reporting heavy smoke in Chalan Kanoa near the Chalan Kanoa Beach Hotel.

Fire engines, medic, and rescue vehicles from the Department of Fire and Emergency Medical Services responded to the scene at 1:21pm. At 1:30pm, Engine 4 was the first to arrive on scene and confirmed the garage was fully engulfed in flames. At 1:36pm, the fire was declared under control.

DFEMS Division of Fire Prevention and Arson Investigation led by Firefighter Max. R. Muna stated his initial scene observations that, after arriving on scene at around 2:4pm and after being briefed by Alpha Shift Commander Lt. B. Kaipat, "I observed a fully concrete 3-bedroom, 2-bath structure. The structure had a garage connected to it located at the northeastern side. Through witness and scene investigation, the fire started at the northeastern side. Further scene investigation revealed that the most affected area was the garage, suffering from moderate to severe heat and smoke damage. In further investigation, the neighboring residence located at the northeast of the structure was burning natural debris, with moderate wind speeds heading south toward the affected structure.

Muña concluded that the cause of the fire was accidental from the debris. ***(DFEMS)***

DFEMS

A fire breaks out at a house in Chalan Kanoa near the Chalan Kanoa Beach Hotel last Saturday, Feb. 5, 2022.

CAMPAIGN KICK OFF

Rep. Edwin K. Propst (D-Saipan) delivers the introduction for the NMI Democratic Party's candidate for governor, Rep. Christina Marie Elise Sablan (D-Saipan), extreme left in front row, during their campaign kickoff last Jan. 26 at the Garapan Fishing Base. Sablan's running mate, Rep. Leila Haveia Fleming Clark Staffler (D-Saipan), partly hidden, is behind Propst, along with Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (Ind-MP), the CNMI's first governor Carlos Camacho, and Democrat lawmakers.

FERDIE DE LA TORRE

CNMI

From Page 1

up to December and that has been trending down for some time. But in the last week or so, there's been a steady, rapid increase in case numbers," she said.

In the past week alone, the number of positive cases in the CNMI per day has surpassed the previous highest it had ever seen back in December, which was 200 cases per day, Kern-Allely said.

"We have reported over 200. It eclipses the number of cases that we've reported in a single day since the start of this community outbreak so we're seeing a rapid increase in cases," she said.

Tthe CNMI has also seen a rise in daily admissions compared to the previous surge of COVID-19 cases back in December. As of late January, the CNMI has had about three admissions a day, she said. Previously, the CNMI had only seen about two admissions a week.

"As our cases rise, we expect to see those hospitalization admission count to also rise in the coming weeks," she said.

Over the weekend, the CNMI saw over 200 positive cases per day, indicating that the anticipated surge in COVID-19 has already begun.

According to a previous *Saipan Tribune* article, a combined 577 new cases of COVID-19 were reported in the CNMI based on three separate news reports from the CHCC that were issued late last Thursday night, Friday, and Saturday, bringing the CNMI's total to 5,891 since March 26, 2020.

A CHCC report on Thursday night said that 261 individuals had been confirmed positive for COVID-19, all of them identified on Feb. 2, 2022.

On Friday, 112 additional cases that were identified on Feb. 2, 2022.

On Saturday, CHCC issued another news release, saying 204 new cases were added to the CNMI's total.

TORRES

From Page 1

res of how he felt during the quarantine period.

Torres earlier disclosed that he received an antigen test last Jan. 30 after having been in close contact with a family member who had tested positive for COVID-19 and was informed shortly after that he tested positive.

Effective last Jan. 29, according to CNMI's updated COVID-19 protocols, individuals confirmed positive for the virus and are asymptomatic must stay at home for at least five days, isolate, and wear a well-fitted mask around others.

211

From Page 1

lated and are being actively monitored, assured CHCC. The vaccination statuses of the 211 cases are pending verification.

This comes soon after CHCC reported successive triple-digit number of new COVID-19 cases in the CNMI since the start of February: 204 on Feb. 5; 112 on Feb. 4; 261 on Feb. 3; 252 on Feb. 2; and 154 on Feb. 1.

As of Feb. 6, 2022, there were eight individuals hospitalized as a result of COVID-19: six are unvaccinated and two are vaccinated. Three have already been discharged

A total of 13 COVID-19 vaccines were administered on Feb. 6, 2022, resulting in 99.7% of the CNMI's eligible population being fully vaccinated.

A total of 715 COVID-19 tests were conducted on Feb. 5, 2022. Of that number, 405 were tested via community-based testing; 204 at the COVID-19 Community Center (referrals only); 67 at Tinian Health Center; and 39 at the Rota Health Center.

Of the total 6,102 cases identified in the CNMI so far, as of Feb. 5, 2022, there have been 4,541 recoveries; 1,538 active cases; and 23 COVID-19-related deaths.

In the latest COVID-19-related fatalities in Guam, the 297th case occurred at the Guam Memorial Hospital on Feb. 6, 2022. The patient was an 81-year-old female, unvaccinated, with underlying health conditions who tested positive on Jan. 19, 2022.

The 298th COVID-19-related fatality was pronounced dead on arrival at GMH on Feb. 6, 2022. The patient was a 70-year-old male, vaccinated, with no known underlying health conditions who tested positive on February 6, 2022.

"[First gentleman] Jeff [Cook], [Lt. Gov.] Josh [Tenorio], and I express our deepest sympathies to their families during this difficult time," said Guam Gov. Lou Leon Guerrero. "Just as our community's healthcare workers are doing all they can to prevent further turmoil, we too must do our part to combat this pandemic. Continue to wear your mask, wash your hands, and watch your distance, and please get vaccinated and boosted to ensure maximum protection from severe illness." ***(Saipan Tribune)***

NMTech reaches out to Tinian, Rota in town hall meetings

The Northern Marianas Technical Institute recently returned to Saipan after doing separate outreaches on Tinian and Rota.

The NMTECH team went to Tinian on Jan. 24-24, 2022, and reached out to Tinian Jr./Sr. High School students by having a town hall meeting at the school on Jan. 24, 2022, at 6:30pm, to introduce the school and its programs to potential students. The event's guest speaker was Chef Jacob Lisua from Triple J Bar K Tinian, who was a Culinary Arts student at NMTech in 2018. The team also did an outreach to the Culinary Arts class at Tinian Jr./Sr. High School.

The NMTech delegation also met with acting Tinian mayor Joseph Santos and Department of Labor resident director Jay Jess San Nicolas, as well as with Northern Marianas College Tinian resident director Maria Aguon, and completed a site visit of their campus.

The NMTech delegation went next to Rota, and stayed there from Jan. 31 to Feb. 1, and had a town hall meeting at the Sinapalo Youth Center on Jan. 31, 2022. The team also did an outreach to the juniors and seniors of Dr. Rita Hocog Inos Jr./Sr. High School.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Representatives of the Northern Marianas Technical Institute holds a town hall meeting at the Tinian Jr./Sr. High School on Jan. 24, 2022.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The Northern Marianas Technical Institute delegation meets with Rota Mayor Efraim Atalig, Department of Labor resident director Christine Cabrera, and Department of Commerce resident director Dean Manglona.

The NMTech delegation also had a meeting with Rota Mayor Efraim Atalig, Department of Labor resident director Christine Cabrera, and Department of Commerce resident director Dean Manglona, as well as with NMTech board of trustee Rota representative Ana Mendolia and NMTech trustees Catherine Attao.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Representatives of the Northern Marianas Technical Institute holds an outreach to the juniors and seniors of Dr. Rita Hocog Inos Jr./Sr. High School.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The Northern Marianas Technical Institute delegation meets with acting Tinian mayor Joseph Santos and Department of Labor resident director Jay Jess San Nicolas.

The NMTech team also met with NMC Rota resident director Diana Benavente Hocog and completed a site visit of their campus.

(Saipan Tribune)

MASO members volunteer in Guam Homeless Coalition's survey

MANGILAO, Guam—Guam Community College student members of the Medical Assistant Students Organization recently volunteered in the Guam Homeless Coalition's point-in-time survey. The GHC's purpose is to respond to the needs of homeless families and individuals by providing support through awareness, education, and advocacy. The GHC concluded its point-in-time survey last Jan. 28, 2022.

MASO public relations officer Cassandra Chang shared her teams' duties during their volunteer time. "We interviewed numerous families and individuals, asking them questions in regards to their household size, ethnicity, and living conditions, which will give a clearer sense of the homeless population in Guam. We also provided supply/food bags to those families and individuals that participated in the survey," said Chang.

■ MASO was formed to enable medical assisting students to enhance and demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and professionalism required by employers and patients; continually demonstrate professionalism in the community and on the Guam Community College campus; and protect the student's right to learn, and promote effective, efficient health care delivery through the optimal use of multi-skilled medical assistant students. MASO is intended to help students maintain the following core values of the medical assistant:

■ Actively participate in the delivery of quality healthcare.

■ Promote patient safety and well-being.

■ Contribute to the positive healthcare experience for patients.

■ Demonstrate integrity and respect and protect confidentiality.

■ Advocate the essential value of certification and continued education.

■ Embrace change, growth, and learning.

Those interested in providing help to our neighbors in need may go to www.guamhomelesscoalition.org for more information. ***(PR)***

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

From left, Cassandra Chang, Ryan Jusi, Jennette Yara, Ramil Padigos Jr., Kenly Magwilli, and Katsuyoshi Uchima.

Public warned of high surf, rip currents

The public is being warned that high surf is present along north facing reefs, while a high rip current risk is present along north and east facing reefs of the Marianas.

A high surf advisory is now in effect starting from 6pm last night to 6am today, Tuesday, while a high risk of rip currents is in effect from 6pm last night through Wednesday afternoon

Based on the information received from the National Weather Service in Tiyan, Guam, and compiled at the CNMI Emergency Operations Center State Warning Point, large breaking waves of 7 to 9 feet are expected in the surf zone of Saipan, Tinian, and Rota.

Dangerous rip currents are also expected from 6 pm last night through Wednesday afternoon, with the rip risk dropping to moderate for north facing reefs.

These conditions will create dangerous swimming and surfing conditions and localized beach erosion. Rip currents can sweep even the best swimmers away from shore into deeper water.

Wave models and satellite-derived sea heights show seas increasing, as the shearline from the north continues to descend across the Marianas. The combination of an east-northeast swell, north swell and elevated northeasterly winds will make surf hazardous along north facing reefs.

The public is advised to avoid venturing out toward north and east facing reefs. Elsewhere, swim near a lifeguard. If caught in a rip current, relax and float. Don't swim against the current. If able, swim in a direction following the shoreline. If unable to escape, face the shore and call or wave for help. ***(PR)***

COMMONWEALTH PORTS AUTHORITY

MAIN OFFICE: SAIPAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, 2ND FLOOR ARRIVAL BLDG.
PO BOX 501055, SAIPAN MP 96950
PHONE: (1-670) 237-6500/1 • FAX: (1-670) 234-5962
E-MAIL ADDRESS: CPA.ADMIN@PTICOM.COM WEBSITE: HTTPS: WWW.CNMIPORTS.COM

Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport
"Car Rental Concession"
CPA-RFP-007-21
Request for Proposals
for: CPA Concession No. CRS-2021-01

The Commonwealth Ports Authority ("CPA" or "Authority") is soliciting proposals for the award of one (1) concession granting the privilege to provide motor vehicle rental services to the traveling public (including the provision of insurance related to motor vehicles rented in the operation of such motor vehicle rental services) at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport ("Car Rental Concession"). The successful proposer will be expected to provide motor vehicle rental services in accordance with its concession and concession agreement at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport for a period of approximately two years (contract to end on 5/31/2024) upon entering into a concession agreement with the Authority.

The date of issuance of CPA-RFP-007-21 is **January 13, 2022**, and it can be obtained at the issuing office: CPA Administration Office, Saipan International Airport, P.O. Box 501055, Saipan, MP 96950, Second floor of Arrival terminal at the Saipan International Airport.

Proposals must be addressed to Commonwealth Ports Authority, Attn: Car Rental Concessions Evaluation Committee, CPA Administration Office, Saipan International Airport, P.O. Box 501055, Saipan, MP 96950; and submitted to and received by the CPA Administration Office (second floor of arrival terminal at the Saipan International Airport) **by or before 4:00 p.m. on February 23, 2022,** at which time the proposal period shall expire. Proposals must be accompanied with a non-refundable administrative fee of $100.00 (certified cashier's checks made out to Commonwealth Ports Authority) to defray the costs associated with handling and considering the proposal. Proposals are not required to include a prepaid minimum concession fee.

The Commonwealth Ports Authority reserves the right to cancel this RFP and to reject any and all proposals in accordance with its Concession Regulations (NMIAC Chapter 40-70).

CHRISTOPHER S. TENORIO
Executive Director

COMMONWEALTH PORTS AUTHORITY

MAIN OFFICE: SAIPAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, 2ND FLOOR ARRIVAL BLDG.
PO BOX 501055, SAIPAN MP 96950
PHONE: (1-670) 237-6500/1 • FAX: (1-670) 234-5962
E-MAIL ADDRESS: CPA.ADMIN@PTICOM.COM WEBSITE: HTTPS: WWW.CNMIPORTS.COM

Benjamin Taisacan Manglona International Airport
"Car Rental Concessions"
CPA-RFP-008-21
Request for Proposals
for: CPA Concession No. CRR-2021-01

The Commonwealth Ports Authority ("CPA" or "Authority") is soliciting proposals for the award of one (1) concession granting the privilege to provide motor vehicle rental services to the traveling public (including the provision of insurance related to motor vehicles rented in the operation of such motor vehicle rental services) at the Benjamin Taisacan Manglona International Airport ("Car Rental Concession"). The successful proposer will be expected to provide motor vehicle rental services in accordance with its concession and concession agreement at the Benjamin Taisacan Manglona International Airport for a period of about two years (contract ends on 5/31/2024) upon entering into a concession agreement with the Authority.

The date of issuance of CPA-RFP-008-21 is **January 13, 2022**, and it can be obtained at the issuing office: CPA Administration Office, Saipan International Airport, P.O. Box 501055, Saipan, MP 96950, Second floor of Arrival terminal at the Saipan International Airport.

Proposals must be addressed to Commonwealth Ports Authority, Attn: Car Rental Concessions Evaluation Committee, CPA Administration Office, Saipan International Airport, P.O. Box 501055, Saipan, MP 96950; and submitted to and received by the CPA Administration Office (second floor of arrival terminal at the Saipan International Airport) **by or before 4:00 p.m. on February 23, 2022**, at which time the proposal period shall expire. Proposals must be accompanied with a non-refundable administrative fee of $100.00 (certified cashier's checks made out to Commonwealth Ports Authority) to defray the costs associated with handling and considering the proposal. Proposals are not required to include a prepaid minimum concession fee.

The Commonwealth Ports Authority reserves the right to cancel this RFP and to reject any and all proposals in accordance with its Concession Regulations (NMIAC Chapter 40-70).

CHRISTOPHER S. TENORIO
Executive Director

Commonwealth Utilities Corporation

INVITATION FOR BIDS
CUC-IFB-22-010

PROVISION OF OPERATIONS, MAINTENANCE, AND MANAGEMENT SERVICES FOR THE POWER PLANT AND DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM ON THE ISLAND OF TINIAN

The Office of the Executive Director for the Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids for the provision of operations, maintenance, and management services for the Power Plant and Distribution System on the Island of Tinian, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

Prospective Bidders must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The Bid Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of **$200.00** (non-refundable) for one IFB package set.

One (1) original and Five (5) hard copies must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked *"CUC-IFB-22-010*, Operations, Maintenance, and Management Services for The Power Plant and Distribution System on the island of Tinian" to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, **no later than 10:00 AM (ChST) on February 22, 2022** at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Bids mailed via postal or courier service must be received on or before due date and time or post-marked before submission deadline. Late submissions and conditional offers will not be considered.

A Payment Bond of one hundred (100%) percent and a Performance Bond of one hundred (100%) percent of the total bid price will be required upon the execution of the contract by the successful bidders. The Payment and Performance bond must be executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety or other surety acceptable to the Attorney General. Surety Company must be authorized to do business in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification shall be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Co`de (Title 4, Division 7). Bidders are required to submit a clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.

All bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid or supply under the contract. The IFB does not commit CUC to award a contract, to pay any cost incurred in the preparation of the bid under this request, or to procure or contract for goods. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed as per the CUC Procurement Regulations.

All bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from registered Proponents and must be submitted in writing **no later than 10:00 AM (ChST) on February 1, 2022**, to Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator, via email manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Marcela Tenorio at marcela.tenorio@cucgov.org, and Christie Sablan at christie.sablan@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids for any reason and waive any defects in the said bids, if in its sole opinion, to do so would be in the best interest of CUC. All bids submitted shall become the property of CUC.

GARY P. CAMACHO
Executive Director

MANNY BOYER SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

UOG wins 4 awards for marketing, communications

UNIVERSITY OF GUAM

A booklet was one of several products of a communications campaign to inform the university and local communities of the University of Guam's five-year Para Hulo' Strategic Plan.

UNIVERSITY OF GUAM

A screenshot from the UOG Livestream Telethon for COVID-19 Relief in April 2020 shows a video message from health care workers at the start of the pandemic.

The University of Guam is the recipient of four Blue Pencil and Gold Screen Awards from the National Association of Government Communicators. The awards include first-place awards for the UOG Livestream Telethon for COVID-19 Relief held in April 2020 and the University of Guam Economic Impact Report as well as second-place awards for communication of its UOG Cares initiative and Para Hulo' Strategic Plan.

"These projects demonstrated significant engagement with their target audiences and really showcase the creativity and skill of our UOG marketing team," said Jonas Macapinlac, chief marketing and communications officer. "We're honored to have the University of Guam recognized on a national stage and to have our work be what other state and federal government agencies look to for inspiration."

Listed as one of the 21 most coveted government leadership awards, the Blue Pencil and Gold Screen Awards program, through the not-for-profit organization of NAGC, recognizes excellence in government communication at all levels of government.

The university's four awards were among a total of 97 awards recognizing more than 50 agencies in the 2021 cycle.

The winning projects for the University of Guam were:

■ **UOG Livestream Telethon for COVID-19 Relief**

1st Place: Special Event

www.youtube.com/uogtritons A virtual event to quickly fundraise for medical gear in Guam at the onset of COVID-19 that featured video clips of various experts and entertainers bringing advice and encouragement to viewers.

■ **UOG Economic Impact Report**

1st Place: Technical or Statistical Report

www.uog.edu/economic-impact A report commissioned and publicized by the university to substantiate the impact the University of Guam has in the local economy and job market.

■ **Para Hulo' Strategic Plan Campaign**

2nd Place: Internal Communications

www.uog.edu/parahulo A communications campaign to package the university's five-year strategic plan in an easy-to-reference format for the university and local communities.

■ **UOG Cares Initiative**

2nd Place: Educational or Promotional Campaign of Less Than $100K

www.uog.edu/uog-cares A campaign produced entirely in-house with no additional marketing costs to inform UOG students of the various forms of financial, academic, and health and wellness support available to help them stay the course toward their degree during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The University of Guam also recently won three Gold Awards from the Collegiate Advertising Awards and four "Best of" awards from the Internet Advertising Competition of the Web Marketing Association—bringing 11 national awards to the island for marketing and communications in 2021. ***(UOG)***

UNIVERSITY OF GUAM

The University of Guam commissioned and publicized the University of Guam Economic Impact Report in 2021 to substantiate the impact the University of Guam has in the local economy and job market.

CNMI DIVISION OF PROCUREMENT SERVICES
CNMI GOVERNMENT

INVITATION TO BID
RFP NO.: ITB22-BECQT-42200069

SUBMISSION DATE: MARCH 03, 2022 TIME: 09:30 A.M.

"OFFICE SPACE RENTAL FOR THE BUREAU OF ENVIRONMENTAL & COASTAL QUALITY – TINIAN BRANCH"

COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATIONS MAY BE OBTAINED AT THE OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT SERVICES, LOCATED AT THE HORIGUCHI BLDG. GROUND FLOOR, 123 KOPPA DI ORU & BEACH ROAD, GARAPAN SAIPAN, DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

****FOR YOUR SAFETY & OURS: ALL INTERESTED INDIVIDUALS ARE REQUIRED TO USE A FACE MASK & ARE REQUIRED TO REGISTER UPON ENTRY****

THE LESSOR MUST COMPLY WITH CNMI PUBLIC LAW 15-23. ARTICLE 5, SECTION 8652 (A-D)

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

THE CNMI GOVERNMENT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, OR PORTIONS THEREOF, AND WAIVE IMMATERIAL DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CNMI GOVERNMENT.

/S/ ELI D. CABRERA
ADMINISTRATOR, BECQ

/S/ FRANCISCO C. AGUON
ACTING DIRECTOR, P&S

Faith, Hope and KARIDAT

A Northern Mariana Islands Social Service
JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

(1) ACCOUNTANT

For more information, job description and an application visit the Karidat main office at Sister Remedios Community Center, Chalan Kanoa.

DOCUMENTS REQUIRED: A completed application form, copy of diploma/degree, resume/bio-data; current police clearance within 6 months and a copy of valid CNMI driver's license.

NO PHONE INQUIRIES PLEASE.
CLOSING DATE: FRIDAY, February 11, 2022 AT 4:00 PM

William Torres
Estate Administrator
P.O. Box 10001 PMB 2318
Saipan, MP 96950
E-Mail: asterlaje2@gmail.com
Mobile: 670-287-7737

Pro Se

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT FOR THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

IN THE MATTER OF THE ESTATE OF: ROSALIA TENORIO SABLAN: Deceased/ Decedent	Civil Action No. 21-0259 NOTICE OF HEARING ON ADMINISTRATOR MOTION FOR DECREE OF FINAL DISTRIBUTION; FOR COURT APPROVAL ON AND FOR PERFORMANCE IN SATISFACTION OF FHB CLAIM Date: February 24, 2022 Time: 10:00am

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Administrator for the Estate of Rosalia Tenorio Sablan, William Torres, has moved the Superior Court of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) for decree of final distribution of the estate inventory pursuant to Comm. R. Prob. Pro. 12, subject to the approval of this Court for performance of satisfaction of a creditor claim pursuant to Com. R. Prob. Pro. 11 and 21, and the distribution contingent to such performance of claim by First Hawaiian Bank.

The hearing on the Administrator request is scheduled to be heard on the date and time set forth above at the Superior Court of the Northern Mariana Islands. Interested person or entity making known creditor claim filed within the sixty (60) day period of publication of notice to creditors in this probate action in the Estate of Rosalia Tenorio may appear at this hearing.

Dated this 7th day of February, 2022.

/s/
Clerk of Court

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
CNMI GOVERNMENT

INVITATION TO BID
ITB NO.: DPW22-ITB NO.: 42200064

SUBMISSION DATE: March 15, 2022 TIME: 10:00 A.M.

"Kagman Pathway Lightings, Saipan"

COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATIONS MAY BE OBTAINED AT THE TECHNICAL SERVICES DIVISION, DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS, LOCATED ON SECOND FLOOR, OLEAI JOETEN COMMERCIAL CENTER, SAN JOSE, SAIPAN, DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

The project package will be available on or after **February 08, 2022** at Technical Services Division, Department of Public Works, located on Second Floor, Oleai Joeten Commercial Center, San Jose, Saipan.

A non-refundable payment of **One Hundred Dollars ($100.00**) is required for each set. Payment must be made to the CNMI Treasurer and a receipt of payment must be presented when obtaining the Scope of Work at DPW Technical Services Division required for each set.

There will be a **Pre-bid Conference** for this project on **February 24, 2022**, 9:00 a.m. local time at the Department of Public Works Conference Room 2nd Floor, Oleai Joeten Commercial Center Office, Saipan. The Prospective bidders are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the site. All question regarding this project must be submitted in writing no later than 4:30 p.m. local time on **March 10, 2022** to **Mr. Anthony A. Camacho, Director of Technical Services Division**, 2nd Floor, Oleai Joeten Commercial Center, Saipan or fax to (670) 234-3547. Response to questions shall be shared with prospective bidders.

THE CNMI GOVERNMENT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, OR PORTIONS THEREOF, AND WAIVE IMMATERIAL DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CNMI GOVERNMENT.

/S/ JAMES A. ADA
SECRETARY, DPW

/S/ FRANCISCO C. AGUON
ACTING DIRECTOR,
DIVISION OF PROCUREMENT SERVICES

CNMI DIVISION OF PROCUREMENT SERVICES
CNMI GOVERNMENT

INVITATION TO BID
RFP NO.: ITB22-BECQR-42200068

SUBMISSION DATE: MARCH 03, 2022 TIME: 09:00 A.M.

"OFFICE SPACE RENTAL FOR THE BUREAU OF ENVIRONMENTAL & COASTAL QUALITY– ROTA BRANCH"

COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATIONS MAY BE OBTAINED AT THE OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT SERVICES, LOCATED AT THE HORIGUCHI BLDG. GROUND FLOOR, 123 KOPPA DI ORU & BEACH ROAD, GARAPAN SAIPAN, DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

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/S/ ELI D. CABRERA
ADMINISTRATOR, BECQ

/S/ FRANCISCO C. AGUON
ACTING DIRECTOR, P&S

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
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The Associated Press | Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

While the world cheers on Olympians, China must answer for its human rights record

At their core, the Olympics have always been about presenting the best that human determination and perseverance can achieve, creating ever so briefly a stage on which people from countries around the world can compete on a level playing field.

As the Beijing Winter Olympics get underway, the games will again be a showcase for athletes who have dedicated years to honing their minds and bodies. They should also, however, put the host country in the spotlight—and not a flattering one.

As the Chinese government strives to project strength and international cooperation, the very same state will be busying itself with appalling human rights abuses, particularly against the majority-Muslim Uyghur population in the Xinjiang region, where Chinese officials have engaged in an unprecedented campaign of surveillance, detention and genocide under the guise of anti-terror efforts.

President Xi Jinping has attempted a wholesale gutting of Hong Kong's traditions of democratic self-rule and freedom of expression, reneging on promises to respect the region's autonomy while suffocating the free expression that made that a great global city.

Outside its own borders, Xi's China continues to recklessly insinuate military action against Taiwan, a small nation that has battled enormous headwinds to become a global manufacturing giant with a vibrant civic life and culture.

Turn on the TV and enjoy the speed, strength, acumen and artistry; who can resist a perfect double axel or slapshot? But don't dare let China skate.

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MIKE SMITH
LASVEGASSUN2022
IT'S ANOTHER SEVERE WINTER STORM.
IF TRUMP WERE PRESIDENT, HE'D CONTROL MOTHER NATURE.
MAGA

How the pandemic helped prepare me to cope with my father's final days

By STACY TORRES
Los Angeles Times

Stacy Torres is an assistant professor of sociology in the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences at UC San Francisco.

"Dying happens on its own schedule," I told a concerned friend who called to check on me last May. Since I'd begun caring for my father dying at home, I couldn't plan a shower let alone a phone call.

We talked a few minutes before I dropped the phone. My sister Shauna yelled for help lifting Dad, who'd gone from walking to needing a wheelchair in a week. We hoisted him onto the commode. "This might be it," I said, sensing death nearer as he shook and strained.

He survived the night but died the next day.

Almost eight months later, hunkered down again with the omicron surge, I've grown nostalgic for that terrible, yet mystical time of helping Dad die.

Dad never got COVID. He barely left home for more than a year. But the same lung cancer that stalked him for 16 years returned and finished him in a month, a cruel coda to our efforts to keep him safe throughout the pandemic.

The careening pace of pandemic time prepared me for the uncertainties of Dad's last days as we assisted him with a kind of reverse birth, or death, midwifery. As we raced to keep up with his physical declines, we soon had to lift him, bathe him, guide his most private of parts—the organ that helped give us life—into a urinal. We were bombarded with agonizing decisions from the infinitesimal ("Can Dad swallow two drops of lemonade?") to the staggering ("Should we have a do-not-resuscitate order?").

I was powerless to hasten the end of a global virus or to slow cancer's march through my Dad's body. But I could surrender to the gifts of seclusion and quarantine time. Our last time together.

Dad preferred not to ask his oncologist about timelines. "Can't do anything. I'm not scared, everybody has to die," he said. We embraced the uncertainty that the pandemic had conditioned us to accept and stopped asking how long Dad would last. I bought my sister a one-way plane ticket from California to New York. "It's bad," I said. "But we'll make it a party." And we did.

Dad always loved when we stayed home with him. Do you have to go anywhere? No. How long are you staying? Forever. We joined my father's world and never left. One of us always remained in the room, sleeping by his side.

Before he stopped eating, we fed him bits of favorite foods: Chilean hot dogs, Neapolitan ice cream, Dominican-style stewed chicken with sweet plantains. My father's glowing television served as an electronic hearth, nightlight and constant companion. When not watching Cantinflas comedies, "Taxi Driver" or "Scarface," the Music Choice 70s channel played day and night, providing a musical history of my father's early life and the soundtrack for the last stories he would tell.

The music returned him—and us—to some of his best days, when he sailed the world for five years as a merchant marine before arriving in New York in 1975 as an undocumented Chilean immigrant. He was 32. Familiar songs provided an entree to whatever snatches of memories my father had energy to share.

One night he perked up at Barry White's deep bass-baritone crooning "Can't Get Enough of Your Love, Babe." "It makes me think about when I first came to this country," Dad said. He described a Chilean restaurant in Chelsea where he listened to White on the jukebox. "I was walking with you and your mother past there and all my friends said hi. You was in the stroller, little baby."

Dad's music served as a balm to my exhaustion, as days blurred and crashed into each other. Late at night I moved from researching pandemic survival tips to educating myself about how to care for the dying. I Googled "Can't close eyelids, is death near?" and Yelped cremation services.

"Get Up and Boogie" played in heavy rotation with cruel irony when Dad could no longer walk to the kitchen. I pictured his younger self, when his strong body hustled to gain a foothold in this country, and he escaped the doldrums of back-breaking manual labor at Studio 54 and the Copa.

During my father's last moments, Chic's pulsing "Good Times" played as we observed his breath slow and stomach stop rising. The song's message reflected my father's lifelong philosophy about not wasting time, leaving worries behind and embracing the good times.

Now, sitting alone in his room, I listen to the music he loved with weariness and joy. Whenever a Bee Gees song plays, my father's love insulates me from a world that feels more crumbly each day. I hear his trademark refrain: "You have to be happy. We have everything."

EDITORIAL POLICY Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

How to save democracy—elect fewer jerks

By PETER JENSEN
The Baltimore Sun

*Peter Jensen is an editorial writer at T*he Sun*; he can be reached at pejensen@baltsun.com.*

Having recently completed my 40th year as a card-carrying journalist, I feel compelled to share the one small nugget of wisdom I have gleaned from all those misspent hours hanging out with mayors, governors, legislators and other ne'er-do-wells of elected office. They are not all the same. This will shock some of you, I know, but like other human beings, they range from truly nice people to miserable jerks. This is not a matter of political viewpoint, age or gender. Awful people come in all shapes and sizes and party affiliations.

But here's the question: Can you spot them?

I ask this because the 2022 primary elections are fast approaching, and I worry that average people, those who are not stuck in late-night government budget briefings or hanging out in the corridors of the U.S. Capitol (without shaman gear, of course) or texting back and forth with county council members, can't easily tell the difference. How much does any voter spend pondering the qualifications of any candidate? Alas, awareness of party affiliation or even policy platforms doesn't quite cut it. How will a potential officeholder deal with a crisis? Is he or she willing to compromise? Can they work well with others? Are they open minded or willing to be educated? Such attributes aren't readily apparent, yet they seem more valuable than ever in these volatile, highly partisan and democracy-imperiling times.

Journalists haven't made this easy. In attempting to be even-handed, my colleagues and I are loath to highlight decency—at least not directly. And these are subtle qualities. Think of good person versus complete jerk as a continuum. I, for example, lean slightly toward the jerk side. I know this because my wife helpfully points it out—with some frequency. This is just one of the thousands of reasons I have never run for public office.

But I know good people when I see them. Take, for example, U.S. Rep. Jamie Raskin, a Democrat who represents Maryland's 8th Congressional District. I have known him since his days in the Maryland General Assembly serving as a state senator from Montgomery County. He is smart, knowledgeable and patient—even with those who do not agree with him.

In recent years, the 59-year-old former constitutional law professor has gained national attention for serving as lead manager in the second impeachment trial of President Donald Trump and for his service on the House select committee investigating the Jan. 6 insurrection. He has also written a memoir, "Unthinkable: Trauma, Truth, and the Trials of American Democracy," that explores both that insurrection and the loss of his beloved son Tommy, a 25-year-old law student who took his life just one week earlier. His willingness to write candidly and thoughtfully of his personal injury and the harm done by the Capitol violence demonstrate he is no partisan attack dog but a grieving father with a deep streak of humanity.

Yet given that reporters don't write articles that begin, "Congressman Raskin, a good guy … " and most candidates haven't produced bestselling memoirs, how is the average voter to tell the difference between partisan hack and well-informed and capable leader? As it happens, one need only make the effort to read between the lines. Allow me to put those four decades of experience in this area to work on your behalf. Ask yourself these five questions:

1. Does this individual constantly say outrageous things? As satisfying as it may be to hear an opponent described as a criminal or doddering fool, candidates who only trade in heated barbs are the political equivalent of abusers. This kind of play-to-the-crowds shallowness will garner headlines, but it won't lead to getting anything of consequence done whether in the county courthouse or on Capitol Hill.

2. Is the person curious about the world around them? Instead of exploring new ways to call people bad names, decent people invest themselves in complicated issues and reporters usually flock to them to understand exactly what's going on. Next time you meet a candidate, try asking him or her about some subject matter you already know well. Set your BS detector to maximum.

3. Do they appear frequently on partisan media sucking up to hosts? As entertaining as it was to watch Sen. Ted Cruz grovel to Fox News' Tucker Carlson last month to show regret for calling domestic terrorists domestic terrorists, this is a really telling sign of jerkiness. Avoid such people.

4. Do they espouse political talking points even when it's not clear they understand what they mean? Critical race theory is the most recent example. A lot of people absolutely condemn it without even an inkling of understanding of what systemic racism might be and whether K-12 educators seek to indoctrinate students in it (they don't, by the way).

5. Are they sought out by reporters? This is not a perfect barometer. People in high places will always be quoted in news coverage of important issues, but when the individual is not in leadership and perhaps not even a member of the political party in power and is still quoted, it's a sign that reporters trust that person's honesty and sincerity, two attributes rarely found in complete jerks.

The Republicans who did the right thing during the 'Stop the Steal' campaign

By MARK BOWDEN AND MATTHEW TEAGUE
LOS ANGELES TIMES

When Donald Trump and his allies set out to alter the results of the 2020 election, they targeted local election officials and legislators all over the country. Very often the people in these critical positions, and most vulnerable to Trump's influence, were Republicans. Many were his supporters.

Time and again, those officials refused to be cajoled or bullied into altering their election results, or to decline to certify them.

Clint Hickman, president of the Maricopa County, Arizona, Board of Supervisors—over the opposition of his own party, and with protesters calling for his arrest on the front lawn of his home—shunned last-minute phone calls from the president himself and voted along with his majority-Republican board to certify the vote count he knew was accurate.

Aaron Van Langevelde, a little-known Republican member of the Michigan Board of State Canvassers, ignored intense pressure to cast the deciding vote to certify the count in that state. Georgia's secretary of state, Brad Raffensperger, famously stood up to Trump's demand that he "find 11,780 votes."

One of the more remarkable instances happened in tiny Antrim County, Michigan, where County Clerk Sheryl Guy refused to lie in order to advance Trump's cause.

Her case is of particular interest. On election night, Guy made a mistake tabulating the presidential vote. She accidentally transferred thousands of Trump votes to Biden. Antrim County, fingertip of the mitten shape made by Michigan's lower peninsula, is almost all white and almost all Republican. It is solid Trump country. Guy voted for him.

She promptly recognized her tabulation error, and, horrified, fessed up to it, and corrected it. Trump's victory was duly recorded. But she did not move fast enough to beat the Klaxon warnings that sounded across the country. Antrim's brief flicker of blue was exactly the kind of red flag Trump and his allies were looking for. Private jets brought his campaign lawyers and activists to the peninsula, determined to prove that the error had not been Guy's, but the county's voting machines'. Here, at last, was proof that the machines had been rigged. Except Guy refused to budge. The mistake, she insisted, was her own.

Her case illustrates three things often overlooked by those who believe the American election system can be rigged.

First, in little Antrim County the switch of only a few thousand votes—not the millions alleged by Trump—tripped immediate alarm countrywide. Voting patterns in the U.S. are well known and closely watched. Voter data are public. Legislators, reporters and scholars are intimately familiar with it. When any voting district veers dramatically off course, everyone notices.

Second, there is little chance that widespread fraud could happen. The voting system in America is completely decentralized, and therein lies its strength. Elections are orchestrated not by a single agency in Washington, but by hundreds of thousands of local officials in every district, county and state in the union. Elections are run not by some faceless deep state bureaucrats, but by your friends and neighbors. The notion that a significant number of these people, most of whom have never met, could be enlisted in a plot to alter enough votes to change a national election is absurd.

But the third and most important point is this: The American people are not as dishonest or cowardly as Trump would like them to be. Clint Hickman, Aaron Van Langevelde, Brad Raffensperger, Sheryl Guy and hundreds of others like them did not let their personal preference for Trump interfere with their duty or their integrity. Many have paid a price.

Van Langevelde has been dumped from the Michigan canvass board. Raffensperger faces a difficult primary challenge in Georgia from a Trump loyalist who enjoys the ex-president's endorsement. Hickman notes with dismay that his own party in Arizona has made denial of the 2020 election results a requirement for its support. Guy suffered so much abuse that she had decided not to run again for the office that she loved.

Election workers all over the country endured similar persecution and worse. In Atlanta, for instance, police reports show that part-time election helper Ruby Freeman received hundreds of messages—too many for police to read—including death threats. Strangers turned up at her home. Trump himself urged Raffensperger to have her investigated, and Trump's lawyer Rudolph W. Giuliani, testifying before the state legislature, accused her—without evidence—of orchestrating an enormous election scam. She went into hiding.

In key states, legislators still espousing Trump's groundless and destructive theories are supporting efforts to ensure that they can set aside the popular vote entirely and appoint a slate of electors for their preferred candidate.

Democracy is not automatic. It rests on the integrity of ordinary Americans who supervise and certify votes in every county of every state. In 2020, despite intense pressure, these people in case after case, under duress, did their duty. We should take heart from that, but Congress should also act to protect them from harassment, and to ensure that the outcome of every election is determined not by partisan officials, but by the vote. This is so basic that it is hard to imagine an American who would not support it.

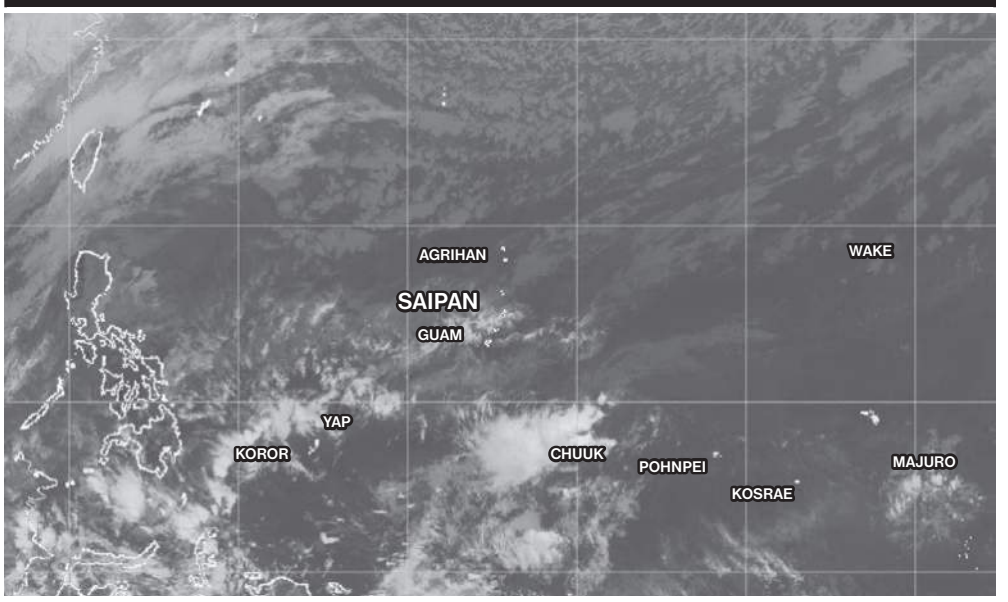
Mark Bowden, the author of 15 books including Black Hawk Down*, and Matthew Teague, a* former Los Angeles Times *reporter, are the authors of* The Steal: The Attempt to Overturn the 2020 Election and The People Who Stopped it.

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Partly cloudy with isolated light showers. Northeast winds 20 to 25 mph becoming east wednesday.	Partly cloudy with isolated light showers. Northeast winds 20 to 25 mph becoming east Wednesday.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers. Lows in the mid 70s	Partly cloudy with isolated showers. Lows in the mid 70	Breezy. Partly cloudy with isolated light showers. Lows in the mid 70s.
85° 75°	86° 76	85° 75°	85° 75°	85° 76°

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 7:00 AM, MONDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2022

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

East to northeast trade winds have increased to become hazardous to small craft across the whole region. Radar shows a few showers located across southern Guam waters. The Ipan buoy shows a primary east swell between 6 and 7 feet at 9 seconds.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

MICRONESIA	▲ ▼ °F	
Guam and Rota	Partly Cloudy/Wind	29 / 24 °F
Palau	Scattered Thunderstorms	30 / 25 °F
Yap	AM Thunderstorms	29 / 26 °F
Chuuk	Partly Cloudy	30 / 27 °F
Pohnpei	Partly Cloudy	30 / 26 °F
Kosrae	Isolated Thunderstorms	30 / 27 °F
Majuro	Partly Cloudy	29 / 27 °F

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	06:44 AM	18:18 PM
Wednesday	06:44 AM	18:18 PM
Thursday	06:43 AM	18:18 PM
Friday	06:43 AM	18:19 PM
Saturday	06:42 AM	18:19 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	10:57	-	-
Wednesday	11:34	00:32 PM	12:13 PM
Thursday	-	01:22 PM	12:55 PM
Friday	-	02:14 PM	13:40 PM
Saturday	-	03:05 PM	14:28 PM

AROUND THE GLOBE	▲ ▼ °F	
Auckland	Thunderstorms	25 / 22 °F
Beijing	Sunny	8 / -6 °F
Hong Kong	Cloudy	18 / 14 °F
Honolulu	Sunny	27 / 20 °F
London	Cloudy	13 / 9 °F
Los Angeles	Sunny	26 / 11°F
Manila	Partly Cloudy	32 / 24°F
Melbourne	Mostly Sunny	31 / 20
Miami	Partly Cloudy	24 / 18 °F
New York	Partly Cloudy	9 / -2 °F
Osaka	Cloudy	9 / -2 °F
Paris	Cloudy	12 / 4 °F
Busan	Sunny	10 / 2 °F
Rome	Sunny	15 / 0 °F
Salem	Partly Cloudy	11 / 10 °F
San Francisco	Sunny	18 / 6 °F
Seoul	Partly Cloudy	5 / -8 °F
Tokyo	AM Clouds/PM Sunny	9 / 1 °F
Washington, DC	Partly Cloudy	8 / -2 °F

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY		FEET
01:03 PM	High Tide	1.20
06:30 AM	Low Tide	0.71
12:36 PM	High Tide	1.58
8:05 PM	Low Tide	0.27

STOP THE SPREAD

The Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. continue to encourage residents within the Marianas to practice social distancing, which means avoiding close contact with people in order to avoid catching the virus yourself and to avoid passing it on to others.

■ Stay home as much as possible. Avoid unnecessary travel or public places.

■ Avoid social gatherings in groups of more than 10.

■ Choose drive-thru, take-out, or delivery options, or outdoor seating, if available, when dining in.

■ Send only one healthy adult from the household run necessary errands, such as getting groceries or picking up medications. Leave children, elderly, and other vulnerable people at home as much as possible. When returning home from an errand, wash your hands before doing anything else.

■ Older adults and people with chronic medical conditions are at higher risk of getting very sick from this illness. People at high risk should stay at home as much as possible.

■ Create a household plan of action, https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/checklisthousehold-ready.html

■ Ensure a 30-day supply of all medicines.

Continue good hand hygiene

■ Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water, avoid touching your face, cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your sleeve.

■ Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not readily available.

Know the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and what to do if you become symptomatic

■ Stay home when you are sick and if you recently traveled to a place with COVID-19. Self-quarantine means:

• Choosing a room in your house that can be used to separate sick household members from others.

• Washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

• Avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

• Limiting visitors

CHCC appreciates the patience and understanding of the community at this time. To obtain general information about the CNMI COVID-19 response, contact the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force Hotline at 287-0046, 287-0489, 287-1089. These numbers are available Monday to Sunday, 7:30am - 4:30pm.

For medical information about COVID-19, reach out to the COVID-19 Infoline at the following numbers: 285-1672/1352. These numbers are available Monday to Friday, 7:30am - 4:30pm.

For mental health support and helpful tips during a crisis, call the Mental Health Support Line at 285-1856, 323-6560, 323-6561 These numbers are available Monday to Friday, 7:30am - 4:30 pm. For the 24/7 Disaster Distress Helpline, call SAMSHA at 1-800-985-5990.

For more information about DIY face coverings, visit https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover.html

For more information about CHCC programs, follow CHCC on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter at @cnmichcc, check out our website at www.chcc.gov.mp or call us at (670) 234-8950.

For more information on the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force, visit www.governor.gov.mpand, follow @GovernorCNMI on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

This health advisory may be found online at http://www.chcc.gov.mp/pressrelease.html and at www.governor.gov.mp/covid-19.

Rumor control

During crises like this, oftentimes the spread of misinformation is just as dangerous as the virus itself. The CNMI is reminded to only share official and verified notices, press releases, and advisories from the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and CHCC.

Source: Office of the Governor

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF FEBRUARY 1, 2022

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA117	7:20am	8:05am	2, 4, 6
UA117	9:50am	10:35am	1, 3, 5, 7

GUAM-MANILA (MNL)

PR 111	6:30am	8:20am	1, 5
UA183	8:00pm	9:50pm	Daily

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

UA117/183	7:20am	9:50pm	2, 4, 6 via Guam
UA117/183	9:50am	9:50pm	1, 3, 5, 7 via Guam

SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)

7C3406	3:10PM	6:55PM	Every 4 days (Jan 29-Mar 2)
TW9308	3:30PM	7:20PM	3, 7
OZ6243	4:00PM	7:40PM	3, 6

SAIPAN-BUSAN (PUS)

BX621	3:10PM	6:30PM	7

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA116	5:30am	6:16am	2, 4, 6
UA174	8:00am	8:46am	1, 3, 5, 7

MANILA (MNL)-GUAM

PR110	10:15pm	4:00am+1	4, 7
UA184	10:40pm	4:30am+1	2, 5
UA184	10:55pm	4:45am+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA184/174	10:40pm	6:16am+1	5 via Guam
UA184/174	10:40pm	8:46am+1	2 via Guam
UA184/174	10:55pm	6:16am+1	1, 3 via Guam
UA184/174	10:55pm	8:46am+1	4, 6, 7 via Guam

INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN

7C3405	8:30AM	2:10PM	Every 4 days (Jan 29-Mar 2)
OZ6233	9:00AM	2:30PM	3, 6
TW9307	10:00AM	2:20PM	3, 7

BUSAN (PUS)-SAIPAN

BX622	8:00AM	1:10PM	7

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines; PR, Philippine Airlines; TW, T'Way Air; OZ, Asiana Airlines; 7C, Jeju Air; BX, Air Busan • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF MAY 18, 2021

SAIPAN TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
1301	8:30AM	9:00AM	Daily
1302	11:00AM	11:30AM	Daily
1303	1:30PM	2:00PM	Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri
1304	3:30PM	4:00PM	Daily

ROTA TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
3101	9:30AM	10:00AM	Daily
3102	12:00AM	12:30AM	Daily
3103	1:30PM	3:00PM	Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri
3104	4:30PM	5:00PM	Daily

ROTA TO GUAM

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
3401	12:15	12:45	Temporarily Unavailable

GUAM TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
4301	13:00	13:30	Temporarily Unavailable

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
1201	7:00	7:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1202	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	10:00	10:15	Daily
1205	11:00	11:15	Daily
1206	12:00	12:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1207	13:00	13:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1208	14:00	14:15	Daily
1209	15:00	15:15	Daily
1210	16:00	16:15	Daily
1211	17:00	17:15	Daily
1212	17:00	17:15	Temporarily Unavailable

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
2101	7:30	7:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2102	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	10:30	10:45	Daily
2105	11:30	11:45	Daily
2106	12:30	12:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2107	13:30	13:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2108	14:30	14:45	Daily
2109	15:30	15:45	Daily
2110	16:30	16:45	Daily
2111	17:30	17:45	Daily
2112	18:30	18:45	Temporarily Unavailable

Business

Spotify CEO to employees: Canceling Rogan not 'the answer'

By TOM KRISHER and LINDSEY BAHR
ASSOCIATED PRESS

Joe Rogan's mouth has put Spotify in a tough spot, but the streaming giant is apparently not ready to part ways with the popular podcast host despite intense criticism over his anti-coronavirus vaccine comments and racial slurs.

Spotify CEO Daniel Ek said in a message to employees released Sunday that the company would not part ways with Rogan.

"While I strongly condemn what Joe has said and I agree with his decision to remove past episodes from our platform, I realize some will want more," Ek said in the note. "And I want to make one point very clear—I do not believe that silencing Joe is the answer."

The letter is the clearest indication yet of where Spotify stands on Rogan's fate with the company. It reportedly paid $100 million to exclusively host the podcast, so dropping Rogan threatens the bottom line but is also a key part of the company's strategy to be a one-stop shop for audio.

Ek

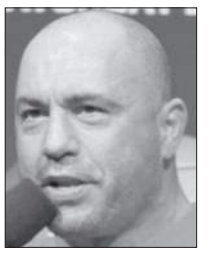
"We should have clear lines around content and take action when they are crossed, but canceling voices is a slippery slope. Looking at the issue more broadly, it's critical thinking and open debate that powers real and necessary progress," Ek wrote. He said he was "deeply sorry" for the impact the controversy was having on Spotify's workforce.

Whether Spotify continues to keep Rogan or cuts ties, the decision likely won't sit well with one side or the other in an increasingly polarized country.

On race, the choice is between keeping Rogan and sending a message that society has become too "woke" or showing that Spotify is more attuned to a multiracial society, said Adia Harvey Wingfield, a sociology professor at Washington University in St. Louis.

"If Spotify says 'We can't drop him. He has the right to say what he wants,' that continues on the line where there is this implicit support to say racist things on these platforms," she said in an interview before Ek's letter.

The streaming site also has to decide whether offensive words are allowable elsewhere on its app, where songs with racist, homophobic and anti-immigrant messages are available, said John Wihbey, a Northeastern University professor and specialist in emerging technologies.


Rogan

"There's some real self-examination to be doing beyond Joe," Wihbey said. "This is a big moment of reckoning for entertainment and streaming platforms to see where the window is, what's over the line."

The bottom-line question should be pretty simple for Spotify, said Erik Gordon, a University of Michigan business and law professor. The conservative Rogan stands in contrast to the much more liberal musicians who generate the bulk of Spotify's profits, he said.

"They can't blow off the artists. The artists make Spotify," Gordon said. "They need to settle up with Rogan, let him go to a home that will be consistent with who he is. And everybody will be better off."

Having Rogan on Spotify is like having a political party with Donald Trump as the presidential candidate and liberal Elizabeth Warren as vice president. "It isn't going to work," Gordon said.

Spotify reports having 406 million active monthly users, up nearly 20% from last year, and advertising has grown largely because of podcasting. The company had 31% of the 524 million music streaming subscriptions worldwide in the second quarter of 2021, more than double that of second-place Apple Music, according to Midia Research.

Rogan's public troubles started on Jan. 24 when musician Neil Young asked to have his music removed because of concerns that Rogan was promoting skepticism about the COVID-19 vaccines. Other artists followed suit, including Joni Mitchell and Roxane Gay.

The scrutiny only intensified when a video compilation emerged last week showing Rogan repeatedly using racial slurs. Grammy-winning artist India.Arie posted it on her Instagram, using the hashtag #DeleteSpotify.

Spotify said previously that it would soon add a warning to all podcasts that discuss COVID-19, directing listeners to factual, up-to-date information from scientists and public health experts.

CNN exec Zucker's ouster shows peril of hiding work romance

NEW YORK (AP)—For all the potential peril of a workplace romance, the most common source of trouble, experts say, is allowing it to remain a secret.

A case in point was this week's abrupt ouster of longtime CNN chief executive Jeff Zucker, who said he was ''wrong" in not being upfront with the network about a consensual relationship he was having with another executive.

Zucker only acknowledged his relationship with CNN chief marketing officer Allison Gollust after being questioned about it during an investigation of now-fired anchor Chris Cuomo. The executive shakeup comes at a pivotal moment for CNN, and prominent employees have expressed dismay that things weren't handled differently.

AP
The CNN logo is displayed at the entrance to the CNN Center in Atlanta on Wednesday, Feb. 2, 2022.

"He should have known better," said David Lewis, CEO of Operations Inc., an HR consulting firm. "He decided to avoid what was a clearly stated policy by his employer. The problem with that is there was no good outcome once he decided not to tell."

Zucker is hardly alone in finding love at the office. About a third of U.S. workers say they are in a workplace relationship or have been in one—and the trend has been on the rise since the start of the pandemic, according to trade association Society for Human Resource Management.

Most big corporations have a policy on workplace romance, but the majority of U.S. businesses do not, according to SHRM. Corporate policies can vary from forbidding all relationships to just those between managers and subordinates. Some simply require disclosure.

Among smaller businesses, there are rarely rules at all. Nearly 80% of U.S. workers say that their employer does not require them to disclose a workplace romance, according to the most recent data from SHRM.

And that can cause just as much trouble as employees keeping relationships secret from a company that actually has a policy.

A policy protects workers from "quid pro quo" relationships, it protects a company's morale, and ideally protects against lawsuits and scandals.

"Companies that choose to look the other way are the ones that are allowing a smoldering fire to turn into an inferno," said David Lewis, CEO of Operations Inc., a human resources consulting firm. "Countless organizations have chosen to not deal with these head on and have paid dearly as a result."

The #MeToo movement shed light on toxic—and at times, criminal—workplace sexual misconduct that even the best office-romance policies are unlikely to prevent. That includes film studio Miramax failing to address long-running accusations against Harvey Weinstein, who was eventually convicted of rape and assault, and NBC's brand being tarnished after sexual misconduct allegations against anchor Matt Lauer.

Hidden consensual romances present their own problems for companies, especially when top executives are involved. Because of the potential for power dynamics to come into play, a relationship with a lower-level employee is usually against policy, even if it is consensual.

When such a relationship comes to light, it often causes a public relations nightmare. In 2019, McDonald's fired CEO Steve Easterbrook after he acknowledged exchanging videos and text messages in a non-physical, consensual relationship with an employee. McDonald's forbids managers from having romantic relationships with direct or indirect subordinates. Then, the company sued him in 2020 when other relationships came to light that he had lied about. Easterbrook ended up returning $105 million to settle the suit.

Having a policy in place is just the first step. Employees may not be aware of it, said Jeff Hyman, CEO of Recruit Rockstars, an online recruiting firm.

"A big problem is, most employees have no idea what their company's policy is," he said. "It's not typically included in an offer letter."

Another common problem is that employees fear they'll be punished if they disclose a relationship, or they don't want human resources involved in a budding romance. So companies need to make it clear that disclosing a relationship helps protect both the employee and the company, and won't be used against them, said Johnny Taylor, CEO of SHRM.

Reports of spyware use on key witness roil Netanyahu trial

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP)—Israeli police allegedly used sophisticated spyware against a key witness in the corruption trial of former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Israeli media reported, jolting the trial and shining a light on a contentious Israeli-developed surveillance tool.

Netanyahu is in the midst of a lengthy corruption trial over charges of fraud, breach of trust and accepting bribes in three separate cases. In the initial report by Israeli Channel 13 last week, police were said to have used spyware to collect information off the witness' phone without first obtaining authorization, sparking an uproar.

Netanyahu's lawyers have demanded answers from the state about what was gathered and how. The report has reenergized Netanyahu's supporters, who have long seen the trial as part of a conspiracy to topple the polarizing former leader. Even Netanyahu's political opponents are outraged.

"This is an earthquake that would justify a governmental commission of inquiry," Cabinet Minister Tamar Zandberg, who sits in the coalition that ousted Netanyahu last year, told Israeli Army Radio Sunday. That the spyware was likely Israeli-developed was a "point of shame," she said.

Amnon Lord, a columnist at the pro-Netanyahu Israel Hayom daily, called for a mistrial.

The witness whose phone was reportedly hacked, Shlomo Filber, is expected to testify in the coming days and Netanyahu's lawyers are expected to request a delay to his testimony. It remains unclear whether any of the evidence allegedly gathered was used against Netanyahu.

Police, as well as a lawyer for Netanyahu, did not respond to a request for comment. But last week, Netanyahu, who was ousted last June by a new coalition government, accused police in a Twitter post of illegally hacking into a phone "to topple a strong, right-wing prime minister."

Israel's Justice Ministry declined to comment.

State prosecutors have told Netanyahu's lawyers that they are "thoroughly examining" the reports, according to internal communications seen by The Associated Press.

Nation

Top Biden aide says Ukraine invasion could come 'any day'

WILMINGTON, Del. (AP)—White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan said Sunday that Russia could invade Ukraine "any day," launching a conflict that would come at an "enormous human cost."

The senior adviser to President Joe Biden offered another stark warning the day after U.S. officials confirmed that Russia has assembled at least 70% of the military firepower it likely intends to have in place by mid-month to give President Vladimir Putin the option of launching a full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

"If war breaks out, it will come at an enormous human cost to Ukraine, but we believe that based on our preparations and our response, it will come at a strategic cost to Russia as well," Sullivan said.

Sullivan did not directly address reports that the White House has briefed lawmakers that a full Russian invasion could lead to the quick capture of Kyiv and potentially result in as many as 50,000 casualties as he made appearances on a trio of Sunday talk shows.

U.S. officials, who discussed internal assessments of the Russian buildup on the condition that they not be identified, sketched out a series of indicators suggesting that Putin intends to start an invasion in the coming weeks, although the size and scale are unclear. They stressed that a diplomatic solution appears to remain possible.

Among those military indicators: an exercise of Russia's strategic nuclear forces that usually is held each fall was rescheduled for mid-February to March. That coincides with what U.S. officials see as the most likely window for invasion.

The administration has stepped up warnings in recent days that Russia increasingly seems intent on further invading Ukrainian territory.

Last week, Biden administration officials said that intelligence findings showed that the Kremlin had worked up an elaborate plot to fabricate an attack by Ukrainian forces that Russia could use as a pretext to take military action against its neighbor.

Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said Thursday that the scheme included production of a graphic propaganda video that would show staged explosions and use corpses and actors depicting grieving mourners.

"It could happen as soon as tomorrow or it could take some weeks yet," Sullivan said. He added that Putin "has put himself in a position with military deployments to be able to act aggressively against Ukraine at any time now."

Sullivan said that the administration held on to hope that the Russians would move to de-escalate the situation through diplomacy.

"The key thing is that the United States needs to be and is prepared for any of those contingencies and in lockstep with our allies and partners," Sullivan said. "We have reinforced and reassured our allies on the eastern flank."

AP

A local resident throws a Molotov cocktail against a wall during an all-Ukrainian training campaign "Don't panic! Get ready!" close to Kyiv, Ukraine, Sunday, Feb. 6, 2022.

US airborne infantry troops arrive in Poland amid tensions

RZESZOW-JASIONKA, Poland (AP)—A few dozen elite U.S troops and equipment were seen landing Sunday in southeastern Poland near the border with Ukraine, following President Joe Biden's orders to deploy 1,700 soldiers there amid fears of a Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Hundreds more infantry troops of the 82nd Airborne Division are still expected to arrive at the Rzeszow-Jasionka airport, 90 kilometers (56 miles) from Poland's border with Ukraine. A U.S. Air Force Boeing C-17 Globemaster plane brought a few dozen troops and vehicles.

Their commander is Maj. Gen. Christopher Donahue, who on Aug. 30 was the last American soldier to leave Afghanistan.

"Our national contribution here in Poland shows our solidarity with all of our allies here in Europe and, obviously, during this period of uncertainty, we know that we are stronger together," Donahue said at the airport.

In Warsaw, Polish Defense Minister Mariusz Blaszczak hailed the deployment, saying that "deterrence and solidarity are the best response to Moscow's aggressive policy, to the aggressive attempt at reconstructing the Russian empire."

Russia has amassed some 100,000 troops on the borders of Ukraine, some for joint military exercises in Belarus, but insists it has no intentions of invading Ukraine.

A collective response by NATO members is "the best response to a threat, the only method of assuring security to Poland and to other NATO countries on the alliance's eastern flank," Blaszczak said.

He stressed he has held a number of talks on the subject with U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin.

Navy identifies SEAL trainee who died after 'Hell Week'

SAN DIEGO (AP)—A Navy SEAL candidate who died just hours after completing the grueling Hell Week test was identified Sunday as a 24-year-old sailor who joined the military last year.

Seaman Kyle Mullen died at a San Diego area hospital on Friday after he and another SEAL trainee reported experiencing symptoms of an unknown illness, the Navy said.

The other sailor, whose name has not been released, was hospitalized in stable condition, the San Diego Union-Tribune reported Sunday.

The cause of death is unknown and under investigation. Both men fell ill just hours after they successfully completed the test that ends the first phase of assessment and selection for the elite Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL (BUD/S) class.

The Navy said neither one had experienced an accident or unusual incident during the five-and-a-half-day Hell Week.

Rear Adm. H.W. Howard III, the commander of Naval Special Warfare Command in Coronado, California, offered his sympathies to Mullen's family in a statement.

"We are extending every form of support we can to the Mullen family and Kyle's BUD/S classmates," Howard said.

Mullen joined the Navy in March 2021, according to his Navy biography. He reported to SEAL training in Coronado in July, the Union-Tribune said.

The Hell Week test is part of the BUD/S class, which involves basic underwater demolition, survival and other combat tactics. It comes in the fourth week as SEAL candidates are being assessed and hoping to be selected for training within the Naval Special Warfare Basic Training Command.

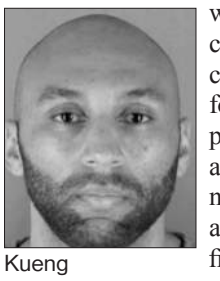
Trial of 3 cops in Floyd killing to resume after COVID pause

ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP)—The federal trial of three former Minneapolis police officers charged with violating George Floyd's rights is expected to resume Monday, after it was abruptly suspended last week because one of the defendants tested positive for COVID-19.

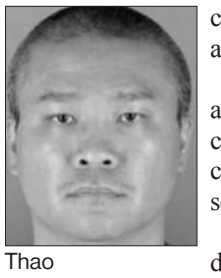
J. Alexander Kueng, Thomas Lane and Tou Thao are accused of depriving Floyd of his rights when they failed to give him medical aid as Officer Derek Chauvin knelt on the Black man's neck for 9 1/2 minutes while Floyd was handcuffed, face-down and gasping for air. Kueng and Thao are also accused of failing to intervene in the May 2020 killing that triggered protests worldwide and a reexamination of racism and policing.

The trial, which was in the middle of its second week, was halted Wednesday when Judge Paul Magnuson said one of the defendants had tested positive. The defendant wasn't named, but Kueng and Thao were in court that day and Lane was not. Lane's attorney declined to say whether his client had COVID-19.

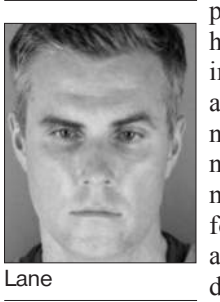
That "trial participant" was to be tested again before the trial resumes, as will all other case participants who had been near that person. The court said Magnuson and the jurors aren't considered close contacts because they weren't within 6 feet of the attorneys' tables.



Kueng



Thao



Lane

Case participants have to answer questions about COVID-19 symptoms each morning before the trial begins. If any test positive, have been in close contact with someone who did, or begins having symptoms, a COVID-19 test is immediately given.

Testimony began Jan. 24 after a jury was quickly selected in one day. Magnuson ordered the selection of six alternates instead of the usual two in case any jurors became ill and had to drop out.

To ensure social distancing, Magnuson set limits on who can be in the courtroom. That includes allowing only four pool reporters plus a sketch artist, along with a limited number of family and friends of the officers and Floyd. Everyone entering the courtroom is asked about symptoms.

The general public and other journalists can watch a closed-circuit TV feed in separate rooms.

Masks are mandatory for most people in the courthouse, as they are in public buildings across St. Paul and neighboring Minneapolis. The judge made an exception for himself, citing a chronic lung condition, and for witnesses when testifying so their voices aren't muffled.

Most other federal court proceedings in Minnesota are being conducted by video or teleconference due to the pandemic, while state courts are using a mix of in-person and remote proceedings.

Asia

UN experts: N. Korea cyber attacks are stealing millions

UNITED NATIONS (AP)—North Korea is continuing to steal hundreds of millions of dollars from financial institutions and cryptocurrency firms and exchanges, illicit money that is an important source of funding for its nuclear and missile programs, U.N. experts said in a report quoting cyber specialists.

The panel of experts said that according to an unnamed government, North Korean "cyber-actors stole more than $50 million between 2020 and mid-2021 from at least three cryptocurrency exchanges in North America, Europe and Asia, probably reflecting a shift to diversify its cybercrime operations."

And the experts said in the report's section on cyber activities obtained Sunday by The Associated Press that an unidentified cybersecurity firm reported that in 2021 the North's "cyber-actors stole a total of $400 million worth of cryptocurrency through seven intrusions into cryptocurrency exchanges and investment firms."

These cyberattacks "made use of phishing lures, code exploits, malware, and advanced social engineering to siphon funds out of these organizations' internet-connected 'hot' wallets into DPRK-controlled addresses," the panel said, using the initials of the country's official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The cryptocurrency funds stolen by the DPRK cyber actors "go through a careful money laundering process in order to be cashed out,"" the panel of experts monitoring sanctions on North Korea said in the report to the U.N. Security Council.

A year ago, the panel quoted an unidentified country saying North Korea's "total theft of virtual assets from 2019 to November 2020 is valued at approximately $316.4 million."

In the executive summary of the new report, the experts said North Korea has continued to develop its nuclear and ballistic missile programs.

"Although no nuclear tests or launches of ICBMs were reported, DPRK continued to develop its capability for production of nuclear fissile materials," the panel said. Those fissile materials—uranium or plutonium—are crucial for a nuclear reaction.

The experts noted "a marked acceleration" of North Korean missile launches through January that used a variety of technology and weapons. The experts said North Korea "continued to seek material, technology and know-how for these programs overseas, including through cyber means and joint scientific research."

A year ago, the panel said North Korea had modernized its nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles by flaunting United Nations sanctions, using cyberattacks to help finance its programs and continuing to seek material and technology overseas for its arsenal including in Iran.

ASIAN BRIEFS

Nepal to reopen schools, other venues as virus cases fall

KATHMANDU, Nepal (AP)—Nepal's capital on Monday announced it would ease strict pandemic measures, with plans to reopen schools and sports venues and slowly return city life to normal, as COVID-19 cases began to decline. The Nepalese government imposed tough restrictions last month as virus cases broke records, fueled by the omicron variant. Schools were shut, religious festivals banned, and restaurants were limited to serving small numbers of customers. The Kathmandu District Administration said in a statement that it would lift limits on road traffic from Monday, which had restricted vehicles to alternating days for odd or even license plates. The announcement added that schools and colleges would be allowed to resume in-person teaching from next week.

Australia to open borders to vaccinated travelers on Feb. 21

CANBERRA, Australia (AP)—Australia will open its borders to all vaccinated tourists and business travelers from Feb. 21 in a further relaxation of pandemic restrictions announced Monday. Australia imposed some of the world's toughest travel restrictions on its citizens and permanent residents in March 2020 to prevent them from bringing COVID-19 home. When the border restrictions were relaxed in November in response to an increasing vaccination rate among the Australian population, international students and skilled migrants were prioritized over tourists in being welcomed back to Australia. Prime Minister Scott Morrison said his senior ministers agreed on Monday that the border would reopen to all vaccinated visas holders from Feb. 21.

SEPARATIST ATTACKS AP

Army soldiers carry a national flag-wrapped casket of an army officer who was killed during a gunbattle with militants in an area of country's volatile southwestern Baluchistan province, at a funeral prayer, in Faisalabad, Pakistan, Friday, Feb. 4, 2022. Twin attacks by separatists on Pakistani military posts in the province triggered intense firefights that lasted hours and killed multiple soldiers and assailants, Pakistan's interior minister and the military said Thursday.

World

WORLD BRIEFS

Moroccans in mourning after trapped boy's death

IGHRAN, Morocco (AP)—An eerie silence fell on a Moroccan village on Sunday after the death of a 5-year-old boy who had been trapped in a well for four days. For days—and nights—the community of Ighran, a village in a mountainous area in northern Morocco, had gathered along the edges of the well, cheering on the rescue workers and volunteers digging deep into difficult terrain to reach the hole where the boy, Rayan, was trapped. They offered support to Rayan's parents. Millions watched the rescue operation on state TV. The boy was pulled out Saturday night by rescuers after a lengthy operation that captivated global attention. Convinced that Rayan was alive, the crowd was cheering as the child was rushed to an ambulance where his parents had been waiting. Just minutes after the ambulance pulled away, a statement from the royal palace said the boy has died.

Ottawa declares state of emergency over COVID-19 protests

TORONTO (AP)—The mayor of Canada's capital declared a state of emergency Sunday and a former U.S. ambassador to Canada said groups in the U.S. must stop interfering in the domestic affairs of America's neighbor as protesters opposed to COVID-19 restrictions continued to paralyze Ottawa's downtown. Mayor Jim Watson said the declaration highlights the need for support from other jurisdictions and levels of government. It gives the city some additional powers around procurement and how it delivers services, which could help purchase equipment required by frontline workers and first responders. Thousands of protesters descended in Ottawa again on the weekend, joining a hundred who remained since last weekend. Residents of Ottawa are furious at the nonstop blaring of horns, traffic disruption and harassment and fear no end is in sight after the police chief called it a "siege" that he could not manage.

West Africa grapples with new wave of military coups

OUAGADOUGOU, Burkina Faso (AP)—It's a pattern becoming all too common again in West Africa: Mutinous soldiers detain a president, then seize control of the state broadcaster to announce they've taken over the country. International condemnation quickly follows, but the junta remains in power. West Africa's new wave of coups kicked off in Mali in 2020, followed by another in Guinea the following year, and then Burkina Faso late last month. Just a week later, gunmen also tried to overthrow the president of Guinea-Bissau in a machine-gun attack that lasted hours but failed. Military power grabs are nothing new in the region: There have been nearly 100 in West Africa since 1946 but they'd dropped off over the past decade.

IN LOVING MEMORY OF

Emily Valles Vargas

March 29, 1960 - January 13, 2022

To everyone who supported us following the death of Emily, we would like to express our sincerest gratitude and appreciation for all your kindness, support, messages of sympathy, comfort and monetary donations during our bereavement. Your acts of love and kindness continue to be a great comfort to us in our time of sorrow. We would also like to thank TanHoldings, the Marianas Christian Church family for arranging the service, the NMTECH team who extended their helping hands during our tribulation and to our many friends and relatives.

THANK YOU ALL VERY MUCH.

The Vargas Family

Overdrive

By HENRY PAYNE
THE DETROIT NEWS

(NISSAN/TNS)
The 2022 Nissan Pathfinder.

2022 Nissan Pathfinder hauls a tall family with ease

The holiday season is behind us, and it's a great opportunity to assess the family SUV.

The holidays demand utility to take on relatives, grocery runs and foul weather. I scored a 2022 Nissan Pathfinder for a Payne family get-together in America's rain capital. Pathfinder is one of the latest in a series of recent Nissan value hits that include the compact Sentra sedan and Rogue SUV. I first met Pathfinder last summer in Michigan, where it came with 6'10" product planner Andrew Molnar showing off its third row.

That's right. Six foot 10. My 6'5" frame fit easily back there as well, giving me confidence that Pathfinder would be up to the job of ferrying three six-foot-plus Payne men and their wives around Seattle's slippery streets for a packed weekend of outings. Our active family doesn't lay around, and my Seattle-based older son had prepared a full agenda.

Mrs. Payne and I picked up a loaded $51,790 Pathfinder at the Seattle airport. I recommend loaded. Not only is Pathfinder full of standard features like blind-spot assist and adaptive cruise control (a tone set for the brand by the Sentra, which includes the same features at a ridiculously low starting price of $25K), but it offers features like 360-degree surround view and panoramic sunroof at a price that won't break the bank. Only the Korean twins of Hyundai Palisade and Kia Telluride rival Pathfinder in value.

Surround view and panoramic roof are essential in Seattle, with its narrow streets and gloomy winter weather that makes Michigan seem bright by comparison.

We arrived under a typical cloud of drizzle. My wife wirelessly synced her Apple phone to the Pathfinder and routed us to my son's apartment in the Queen Anne neighborhood—a close-in suburb. Pathfinder could have taken us to more remote Washington state hills if necessary.

With its all-wheel-drive system, the Nissan was loaded for bear with SNOW, SAND, ROCK, ECO, SPORT and AUTO settings. I would only need AUTO, SPORT and SNOW—the latter coming in handy during torrential rains on Queen Ann hills by cutting torque to the wheels and allowing for easy traction (northerners, take note for challenging snowstorms).

Our weekend would be filled with dinner outings and at least one grocery run. But first up was Sawyer, one of Seattle's finest eateries. My long-suffering wife drew the short straw for the third-row seat first—but the experience wasn't bad. The second-row jumps forward at the touch of a button, allowing easy ingress/egress. That entry is tougher for giants like myself, but once seated, the headroom is palatial and the sunroof lets in lots of light.

The Pathfinder weathered everything Seattle threw at us, too. Despite the constantly changing forecast, the interior climate system work effortlessly—avoiding fogging and loud blowing like, ahem, some other vehicles.

The Pathfinder's ergonomics are well thought out with everything at the driver's fingertips—including an excellent chiclet shifter and sub-console storage for hiding valuables.

Heading to Tukwila for some Saturday afternoon go-karting, the Pathfinder plied Interstate 5 with a competent assisted-driving system that kept us lane-centered and distanced from vehicles ahead of us. It's a system Nissan has touted going back to its "Rogue One: Star Wars" commercials. The system may be able to navigate Star Wars robots, but in an indication of the challenges ahead for a self-driving future, the system would give up in Seattle's heavy rain—the camera struggling to find road lines.

The Green Church has a big congregation in Seattle, and Teslas are a common sight here (though its Chevy Bolt, Mustang Mach-E and Audi EV competitors are conspicuously few). With regular gas at a lofty $4.38 a gallon—and hydroelectric power-fed electricity a cheap 7 cents a kilowatt hour—this is a town where EVs make sense for local commutes.

For longer trips to Washington's lovely mountains and rivers, Pathfinder's 286-horse V-6 offers good grunt combined with 480-mile range that puts your mind at ease. That range is especially important considering the range degradation of EVs in heavy rain.

Pathfinder is also a challenge to Nissan's luxury brand. Built on the same platform as the Infiniti QX60, the Nissan may not be as pretty as its high-class cousin—but the digital interior is the Infiniti's match.

You can put 65 grand down on a Tesla. But when it comes to family duties, a $52K Pathfinder has everything you need for a lot less.

NUTS & BOLTS

- Vehicle type: Front engine, front- and-all-wheel-drive, seven- or eight-passenger SUV
- Price: $34,560, including $1,150 destination fee $51,790 as tested)
- Powerplant: 3.5-liter V-6
- Power: 284 horsepower, 259 pound-feet torque (V-6)
- Transmission: 9-speed automatic
- Performance: 0-60 mph, 6.7 seconds (Car and Driver); Towing, 6,000 pounds
- Weight: 4,506 pounds
- Fuel economy: EPA est. mpg 21 city/26 highway/23 combined

Report card

- Highs: Family-friendly three-row seats; value pricing
- Lows: Big thing to park in the city; wireless Apple CarPlay but not Android Auto
- Overall: 4 stars

Commonwealth Utilities Corporation

INVITATION FOR BIDS
CUC-IFB-22-018

LEASE AND DELIVERY OF MIDSIZE SUV VEHICLES FOR ADMINISTRATION

The Office of the Executive Director for the Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids for the lease and delivery of midsize SUV vehicles for the CUC Administration in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

Prospective Bidders must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The Bid Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of $50.00 (non-refundable) for one IFB package set.

One (1) original and Five (5) hard copies must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked ***"CUC-IFB-22-018, Lease and Delivery of Midsize SUV Vehicles for Administration"*** to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, **no later than 10:00 AM (ChST) on March 10, 2022** at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Bids mailed via postal or courier service must be received on or before due date and time or post-marked before submission deadline. Late submissions and conditional offers will not be considered.

All bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid or supply under the contract. The IFB does not commit CUC to award a contract, to pay any cost incurred in the preparation of the bid under this request, or to procure or contract for goods. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed as per the CUC Procurement Regulations.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from registered Proponents and must be submitted in writing **no later than 10:00 AM (ChST) on February 17, 2022**, to Manny B. Sablan, CUC's Purchasing Administrator, via email manny.sablan@cucgov.org with copies to Jenine Santos, CUC Purchasing Technician at Jenine.santos@cucgov.org, and Marcela Tenorio at email marcela.tenorio@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids for any reason and waive any defects in the said bids, if in its sole opinion, to do so would be in the best interest of CUC. All bids submitted shall become the property of CUC.

GARY P. CAMACHO
Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

Life & Style

Rogan's use of racial slurs adds to pressure on Spotify

By TOM KRISHER and LINDSEY BAHR
ASSOCIATED PRESS

Joe Rogan's mouth has put Spotify in a tough spot. Anti-coronavirus vaccine comments and racial slurs on some episodes of his popular podcast are forcing the streaming service to weigh difficult choices.

Spotify must decide where it stands on race relations and vaccine misinformation in a society with heightened sensitivity to both issues. Then there's the business decision about what to do with Rogan's $100 million podcast, which threatens the bottom line but is also a key part of the company's strategy to be a one-stop shop for audio.

Neither the streaming service nor Rogan was talking Sunday. But experts say Spotify's management team has to choose whether to sever ties with Rogan as it risks more musicians yanking their work in protest. Or is there some middle ground that might be acceptable to artists and subscribers?

Whatever decision emerges won't sit well with one side or the other in an increasingly polarized country.

On race, the choice is between keeping Rogan and sending a message that society has become too "woke" or showing that Spotify is more attuned to a multiracial society, said Adia Harvey Wingfield, a sociology professor at Washington University in St. Louis.

"If Spotify says 'We can't drop him. He has the right to say what he wants,' that continues on the line where there is this implicit support to say racist things on these platforms," she said.

The streaming site also has to decide whether offensive words are allowable elsewhere on its app, where songs with racist, homophobic and anti-immigrant messages are available, said John Wihbey, a Northeastern University professor and specialist in emerging technologies.

'Jackass Forever' laughs its way to No. 1 at box office

By LINDSEY BAHR
AP FILM WRITER

Not even a global pandemic or a 12-year hiatus could stop the Jackass guys at the box office. "Jackass Forever," the fourth movie in the anarchic series earned $23.5 million in ticket sales in its first weekend in theaters, according to studio estimates Sunday.

It not only exceeded expectations but also easily bested its other main competitors, the big budget sci-fi spectacle "Moonfall" and "Spider-Man: No Way Home," which has 6 of its 8 weeks in theaters at No. 1.

"Jackass Forever" brings back Johnny Knoxville, Steve-O, Chris Pontius and Wee Man for another round of pranks, stunts and injuries and has become the best-reviewed in the series. Playing on 3,604 screens in North America, "Jackass Forever" is on the lower end of "Jackass" openings, above only the first, which made $22.8 million in its opening weekend in 2002. The biggest opening of the series was the last one, "Jackass 3D's" $50 million debut in 2010. But, costing only $10 million to produce, "Jackass Forever" is already a clear success for Paramount. The studio was predicting a launch in the mid-teens.

(SEAN CLIVER/PARAMOUNT PICTURES VIA AP)

This image released by Paramount Pictures shows, from left, Johnny Knoxville, Sean "Poopies" McInerny, Rachel Wolfson and Steve-O in a scene from "Jackass Forever."

Men accounted for 68% of the R-rated "Jackass Forever" audience, which was 67% between the ages of 18 and 34.

"Both 'Scream' and 'Jackass Forever' had a very long lag time between installments and absence made the heart grow fonder for 'Jackass,'" said Paul Dergarabedian, the senior media analyst for Comscore. "They've always done quite well. They don't cost a lot to make and the communal nature of the theater elevates a comedy like 'Jackass.'"

"Moonfall," meanwhile, which cost around $140 million to produce, is not doing well stateside. Lionsgate estimated the film's opening weekend grosses to be just over $10 million, which was in line with its projections. Directed by Roland Emmerich and starring Halle Berry and Patrick Wilson, "Moonfall" was not well-received by critics. The disaster pic about a possible collision between the moon and the Earth holds a 40% on Rotten Tomatoes. Like "Jackass," its audience was also mostly male (60%).

"Moonfall" was made and financed independently through Emmerich's Centropolis Entertainment and foreign deals and, like many big budget disaster pics of this ilk, is supposed to earn most of its money internationally. Lionsgate only oversaw distribution in North America and its expected to be profitable for the studio.

"Spider-Man: No Way Home" took in an additional $9.6 million in its eighth weekend in North American theaters, bringing its domestic total to $748.9 million. Globally, its earnings total $1.77 billion.

"Films that appeal to a younger audience have a much bigger potential for success (during the pandemic)," Dergarabedian said. "And the young male audience really seems like they want to go to the movie theater."

In art house releases, Neon debuted "The Worst Person in the World" on four screens this weekend to $135,042. The Norwegian film about a young woman finding herself is shortlisted for an Oscar nomination (which will be announced on Tuesday), topped many critics' best of lists in 2021, and has gotten a fair share of celebrity endorsements (from Nancy Meyers to Paul Thomas Anderson). Its per-theater average ($33,760) is the highest of 2022. Neon will add theaters in the coming weeks.

Though still far from a normal, pre-pandemic weekend, it did break a bit of a lull that will likely continue until "The Batman" opens on March 4.

"It's not the biggest weekend ever but considering how quiet the marketplace has been, it's very welcome," said Dergarabedian.

Estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at U.S. and Canadian theaters, according to Comscore. Final domestic figures will be released Monday.

1. **"Jackass Forever,"** $23.5 million.
2. **"Moonfall,"** $10 million.
3. **"Spider-Man: No Way Home,"** $9.6 million.
4. **"Scream,"** $4.7 million.
5. **"Sing 2,"** $4.2 million.
6. **"The King's Man,"** $1.2 million.
7. **"Redeeming Love,"** $1 million.
8. **"American Underdog,"** $800,000.
9. **"The 355,"** $700,000.
10. **"The Wolf and the Lion,"** $675,027.

Sister isn't the same after removal of tumor

DEAR ABBY: My sister, who was a bright and cheerful star for everyone and anyone, was diagnosed with a brain tumor. It was removed with almost 100% margins several years ago. Our family feels unbelievably blessed that she's OK, but she knows she's not the same. This is ignored by some close relatives, but not by me.

I will forever be grateful for the fact that she's alive and OK, but she is not the sister I once knew no matter how hard she may try. I sympathize with her, I listen, I know she struggles because she's missing her old self. I try with heartfelt messages, but ultimately, I feel useless. And, selfish as it sounds, I miss my sister, my TRUE sister, terribly.

I know this isn't what she wants, and I will be there for her no matter what the future brings. But what else can I do for her? I want to be anything she needs me to be, as she is more than deserving.

SUPPORTIVE SIS IN VIRGINIA

DEAR SIS: While some of her capacity may be diminished, what your sister needs is you to be her stalwart sister and love her for the person she is NOW. Support her, love her, appreciate that she's still with you and quit focusing on those aspects of her personality that are lost. I say this because it isn't healthy for either of you to dwell on the negative at this point, when there is so much for which to be thankful.

***

DEAR ABBY: I divorced my husband of 12 years after catching him cheating with multiple women. I took time for myself and wasn't in a hurry to meet anyone. However, about a year after the divorce, I met a great guy. I was quickly introduced to his family and they embraced me, inviting me to holidays and birthday parties, etc.

Four years went by and we started talking about marriage. We made plans to have our wedding at our favorite beach with family and a couple of friends. There were several people we would have loved to take part, but who couldn't due to the pandemic.

Before the ceremony, my husband and I came up with the idea of wearing white face masks to take a group picture. As the masks were being distributed, his family got angry and said they weren't going to do anything they didn't want to do. They then stomped off and wouldn't participate in the vows or any of the pictures.

They're angry with me, and I am hurt. And the hateful things they said also hurt my husband. I don't know how to handle this.

BAD IDEA IN FLORIDA

DEAR ABBY

By Abigail Van Buren
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

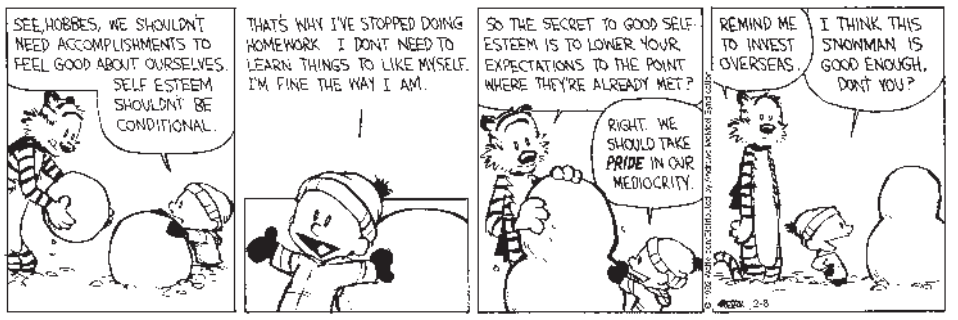
DEAR BAD IDEA: What happened was terrible, and I can't blame you for feeling hurt at the treatment you and your husband received on your wedding day. However, this is the tribe you married into. Your husband's family may have reacted strongly because they objected to having their faces covered in a photo or to face masks in general. If it was the latter, it's a shame they felt they had to take a political stance while you were celebrating your nuptials.

Try to be forgiving. However, if you are abused again, recognize it may be time to distance yourselves and concentrate on your side of the family rather than your husband's.

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson


SEE, HOBBES, WE SHOULDN'T NEED ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO FEEL GOOD ABOUT OURSELVES. SELF ESTEEM SHOULDN'T BE CONDITIONAL.
THAT'S WHY I'VE STOPPED DOING HOMEWORK. I DON'T NEED TO LEARN THINGS TO LIKE MYSELF. I'M FINE THE WAY I AM.
SO THE SECRET TO GOOD SELF-ESTEEM IS TO LOWER YOUR EXPECTATIONS TO THE POINT WHERE THEY'RE ALREADY MET?
RIGHT. WE SHOULD TAKE PRIDE IN OUR MEDIOCRITY.
REMIND ME TO INVEST OVERSEAS.
I THINK THIS SNOWMAN IS GOOD ENOUGH, DON'T YOU?

Garfield®

By Jim Davis

Adam@home

By Bryan Basset

THERE IT IS, SON. THE SNEFAPUTI BEAN.
WAIT. IT'S JUST ONE COFFEE BEAN?
IT'S AN HONOR! I'VE BEEN ON A WAITING LIST FOR ELEVEN YEARS!
OH! THE AROMA IS LIKE NOTHING ELSE!
WOULD YOU LIKE TO SMELL MY BEAN?
DECIDEDLY, NO.

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy

WHAT ARE WE WATCHING?
A DOCUMENTARY.
IT'S ABOUT THE GREATEST CHALLENGE TO WORLD ORDER IN THE 20TH CENTURY.
MILEY CYRUS?
BE NICE.

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

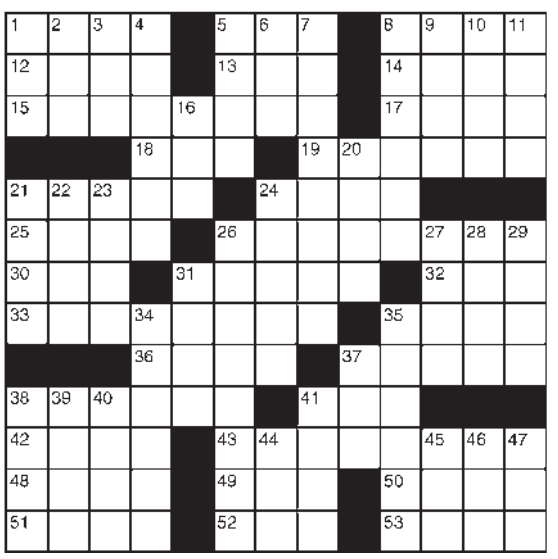
ACROSS
1 Angelic light
5 Bread spread
8 "Li'l Abner" creator
12 "Yeah, right"
13 Eggs
14 Taxi alternative
15 Hawkeye Pierce's workplace
17 U2 lead singer
18 Heart chart (Abbr.)
19 Buffoons
21 Intent look
24 Unpaid TV ads
25 Joule fractions
26 Fine wool
30 Needle hole
31 Vintage synthetic fiber
32 Solidify
33 Undue haste
35 Kid's plea
36 Vortex
37 "Klute" star
38 Andre of tennis
41 In the past
42 Move like a butterfly
43 Uzbek capital
48 Uncivil
49 Desk wood
50 Slender weapon
51 Actor Epps
52 Univ. dorm supervisors
53 Assess

DOWN
1 "Tell —" (Streisand/Dion song)
2 Attorneys' org.
3 Guitar master Paul
4 Everyone else
5 "Fear of Flying" author
6 Bird (Pref.)
7 Works by painter Henri
8 Picasso's movement
9 "Peek-—!"
10 Cooped (up)
11 Experts
16 Guitar's kin
20 Wonka's creator
21 Crystal gazer
22 "— Little Tenderness"
23 Mellows
24 Spring bloom
26 IOU holder
27 Novelist Jennifer
28 Tear
29 Lamb alias
31 Common conjunctions
34 Fictional Prynne
35 Kitchen appliance
37 String after E
38 Roundish do
39 Morose
40 Verdi heroine
41 Requests
44 Motorist's org.
45 Ecol. watchdog
46 Mosquito barrier
47 Casual shirt

Solution time: 22 mins.

B	I	G	■	A	M	A	T	I	■	S	P	A
O	W	N	■	N	I	■	R	O	■	T	O	V
S	O	U	L	T	R	A	I	N	■	A	P	E
■	■	■	A	L	A	■	E	I	S	N	E	R
S	Y	S	T	E	M	■	S	A	N	D	■	■
C	O	H	■	R	A	P	■	N	O	T	E	D
A	L	O	T	■	X	E	S	■	W	A	L	E
R	O	W	F	O	■	W	I	T	■	I	I	F
■	■	T	R	O	T	■	S	E	A	L	E	R
C	H	U	R	R	O	■	T	S	P	■	■	■
H	U	N	■	S	W	E	E	T	T	A	L	K
A	L	E	■	E	N	■	R	E	■	F	I	G
P	A	S	■	I	E	A	S	E	■	I	U	B

Yesterday's answer 2-8



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955!** 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Seth Green, 48; Mary Steenburgen, 69; Robert Klein, 80; Nick Nolte, 81.

Happy Birthday: Stand up for your rights. Let go of the past, and head in a direction that offers a better future. Refuse to make questionable or unnecessary changes. Keep the peace, but not at the expense of taking on something that doesn't interest you. Consider what will make you happy and head in that direction. Your numbers are 8, 19, 23, 28, 33, 37, 41.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19):* Watch, and you'll see a pattern form that will help you make up your mind. Call on someone who offers sound advice, and you'll come up with a plan that will put your mind at ease and give you something to celebrate. ✪✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20):* Don't let uncertainty hold you back. Check off all the boxes and forge ahead with confidence. It's up to you to make things happen and turn your ideas into something substantial. Celebrate what you accomplish with someone you love. ✪✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20):* Don't lose sight of your goal. Set your radar on your target, and don't stop until you are happy with the results. Steer clear of anyone who tends to meddle or entices you to be indulgent. Take your responsibilities seriously. ✪✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22):* Use your skills and knowledge to find a distinct way to get ahead. Partner with someone who has something to contribute, or discuss your ideas with an expert who can help you focus on what you want to achieve. ✪✪✪✪

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22):* Consider indecisiveness a red flag and say no. Spare yourself the worry and stress of getting involved in something that makes you feel uneasy and vulnerable. Protect what you have worked so hard to achieve, and nurture meaningful relationships. ✪✪

VIRGO *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22):* Live in the moment, observe what's going on around you and learn all you can to help you turn your skills and attributes into a lucrative commodity. Socialize and network with like-minded people, and promising opportunities will open up. ✪✪✪✪✪

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22):* Put a halt on joint ventures or shared expenses. Divvy up what's yours and what's not to protect against loss or take care of damage control. Go it alone if you want to get things done. ✪✪✪

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21):* You'll attract people who are disciplined and ready to take on additional responsibilities. Discussing your plans with a friend or relative will be enlightening and offer you many options to consider regarding your long-term goals. ✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21):* Do what suits your needs and helps you stay on course. Taking care of your responsibilities will also keep someone at arm's length who is trying to interfere. A serious approach to how you make and handle your finances is encouraged. ✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19):* Pay attention to detail, organize your thoughts and incorporate changes at home and to your schedule to ensure you reach your objective. A kind word will lift someone's spirits and give you a better chance to get what you want. ✪✪✪✪✪

AQUARIUS *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18):* Take note of what others do and how they act before you respond. Keep your thoughts to yourself, which will help you assess what's going on without making waves. Time is on your side, and patience will pay off. ✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20):* It's up to you to bring about change if that's what's required. Don't wait for someone to make a move when taking the helm and making things happen will bring higher returns. Take a leadership position and call the shots. ✪✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are disciplined, attentive and resourceful. You are opportunistic and assertive.

✪: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ✪✪: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ✪✪✪: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ✪✪✪✪: Aim high; start new projects. ✪✪✪✪✪: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

2			6		9	1		
	9	4						
	1			5	2	4	7	
					6	9		
9		3				5		1
		8	3					
	2	5	9	6			8	
						7	1	
		1	4		5			6

Difficulty Level ★★ 2/08

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's Answer

9	2	7	8	1	3	6	4	5
5	3	4	6	9	7	2	1	8
6	1	8	4	5	2	9	3	7
8	6	9	2	3	5	4	7	1
3	5	2	7	4	1	8	6	9
7	4	1	9	6	8	5	2	3
4	8	6	3	7	9	1	5	2
2	7	5	1	8	4	3	9	6
1	9	3	5	2	6	7	8	4

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the WONDERWORD.

DESMOND TUTU (1931-2021) Solution: 11 letters

H	T	S	U	J	U	M	A	N	A	W	S	T	O	B
H	A	D	O	O	G	A	P	A	R	T	H	E	I	D
C	S	A	C	H	S	E	S	O	T	H	O	S	E	E
A	N	S	C	A	T	N	R	N	M	Y	H	A	N	G
E	O	E	I	N	P	O	S	T	R	O	N	A	P	R
T	I	R	B	N	V	E	S	N	P	I	C	T	I	E
N	T	E	A	E	L	L	T	E	O	I	G	H	H	E
E	A	H	R	S	L	A	C	O	L	Ⓑ	L	E	S	F
M	N	T	A	B	Q	N	D	G	W	Ⓞ	E	O	R	F
E	I	C	R	U	G	D	N	E	N	Ⓝ	N	L	A	O
R	M	R	E	R	R	A	E	D	M	Ⓓ	I	O	L	R
I	O	E	E	G	X	H	O	S	A	H	A	G	O	T
T	N	E	I	C	O	N	T	N	A	O	M	I	H	S
E	K	D	S	D	E	T	N	I	O	P	P	A	C	I
R	E	F	F	O	Z	I	L	A	M	O	N	N	S	L

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Anglican, Apartheid, Appointed, Arabic, Bishop, Bond, Botswana, Cape Town, Creed, Dean, Dear, Degree, Efforts, Good, Greek, Hymn, Icon, Johannesburg, Just, Land, Lesotho, List, Local, London, Main, Medal, Naomi, Nobel, Nominations, Nomalize, Offer, Post, Queen, Rare, Retirement, Scholarship, Sesotho, Teach, Theologian, Theresa, Trevor, Xhosa

Yesterday's Answer: Gratitude

To purchase THE COLLECTED WONDERWORD, Volumes 50, 51 and 53 through 66, order on line at www.WonderWordBooks.com.

Joel Embiid scores 40 points, 76ers hold off DeRozan, Bulls

CHICAGO (AP)—Joel Embiid set the tone, dominating right from the start and never letting up. It was just what Philadelphia needed.

Embiid had 40 points and 10 rebounds and the 76ers overcame DeMar DeRozan's season-high, 45-point game for Chicago to beat the Bulls 119-108 on Sunday.

The 76ers won the matchup between two of the Eastern Conference's top teams after letting a 17-point lead early in the fourth quarter shrink to four.

They hung on down the stretch to beat the Bulls for the 10th straight time. They also knocked Chicago a half-game behind first-place Miami and pulled within 1 1/2 games of the idle Heat. With the 76ers' victory, Miami clinched the best record in the East through Sunday, sending Erik Spoelstra and his Heat staff to the All-Star Game in Cleveland to coach Team Durant.

"We've beaten a few of those top teams," Embiid said. "Also, we dropped games that we shouldn't have, so it goes both ways. We're right there. And I've been saying it — for us to have a chance, we have to be perfect. I have to do what I've been doing, be that dominant and maybe even more."

Embiid sure was dominant in this one, finishing with 40 or more points for the seventh time this season. The NBA's leading scorer, he hit 14 of 23 shots.

Tobias Harris added 23 points, and Tyrese Maxey had 16, helping the Sixers shake off losses against Washington and Dallas to win for the sixth time in eight games.

"We had to win this game," Embiid said. "Like I said, I knew I was gonna be ready. I knew I was gonna bring more intensity to the game today. But we didn't win just because of me."

DeRozan did all he could to carry the Bulls, with Zach LaVine (back spasms) and guard Coby White (strained right adductor) missing their second consecutive games. The All-Star finished seven points shy of his career high.

Nikola Vucevic scored 23. Javonte Green added 17 points. The Bulls fell to 0-3 against Philadelphia, though they stayed competitive against a good team despite having a long list of key players out with injuries. That includes Lonzo Ball and Alex Caruso.

"We know we're gonna get everybody back in due time," DeRozan said. "Until then, we're just trying to figure it out. We're just trying to continue to get better, figure out our mistakes on the go."

The Sixers looked as if they were ready to put this one away, leading 98-81 early in the fourth quarter after a 13-0 run that started in the third. The Bulls answered with 13 straight, pulling within four on DeRozan's 19-footer, and it remained tight until the closing minutes.

Chicago's Ayo Dosunmu made a 3 to make it 112-106 with just over three minutes remaining. Seth Curry answered with a floater and Harris drove for a layup to bump Philadelphia's lead to 10 with two minutes remaining.

AP

Philadelphia 76ers center Joel Embiid, right, blocks a shot by Chicago Bulls forward Malcolm Hill during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Chicago, Sunday, Feb. 6, 2022.

Nuggets 124, Nets 104

In Denver, Nikola Jokic had 27 points, 12 rebounds and 10 assists for his NBA-leading 14th triple-double of the season and Denver handed shorthanded Brooklyn its eighth straight loss.

Will Barton had 21 points and Aaron Gordon had 17 points and nine rebounds in his return from a two-game absence to help Denver end a three-game skid.

Kyrie Irving had with 27 points and 11 assists for Brooklyn.

Nets guard James Harden missed his second straight game with left hamstring tightness. Brooklyn coach Steve Nash was asked before the game if it's accurate the team won't trade Harden before Thursday's deadline and gave a definitive answer. "Yes, that's correct," he said.

Cavaliers 98, Pacers 85

In Cleveland, Cedi Osman scored 22 points, and Kevin Love had 19 and Cleveland rallied from 20 down to beat Indiana, shortly after agreeing to acquire shooting guard Caris LeVert from the Pacers.

Jarrett Allen had 15 points and 17 rebounds, and Rajon Rondo added 15 points and a season-high 12 assists off the bench for Cleveland, which is one game behind East-leading Miami. The Cavaliers made their first eight 3-pointers in the fourth.

LeVert will be acquired for injured guard Ricky Rubio — and his expiring $17.8 million contract — and three draft picks, a person familiar with the trade told The Associated Press. Cleveland also will receive a 2022 second-round pick.

Chris Duarte led Indiana with 22 points.

Bucks 137, Clippers 113

In Los Angeles, Giannis Antetokounmpo had 28 points, Jrue Holiday added 27 and Milwaukee routed Los Angeles.

Antetokounmpo also had 10 rebounds, and Holidway had 13 assists. Bobby Portis added 24 points and 11 rebounds. Milwaukee tied a season high in points.

Norman Powell, acquired in a five-player trade with Portland on Friday, had 28 points in his Clippers debut.

Mavericks 103, Hawks 94

In Dallas, Luka Doncic had a triple-double with 18 points, 10 rebounds and 11 assists, Jalen Brunson scored 22 points despite both of them being in foul trouble and Dallas beat Atlanta.

Doncic sat almost the entire third quarter following his fifth foul less than a minute into the second half. Brunson joined him on the bench with his fifth about six minutes later.

John Collins had 22 points and 18 rebounds for Atlanta. Trae Young missed all six of his 3-point attempts and finished with 17 points on 6-of-19 shooting.

Celtics 116, Magic 83

In Orlando, Fla., Jaylen Brown scored 26 points and Boston beat NBA-worst Orlando for its season-best fifth straight win.

Boston limited Orlando to 35.8% shooting from the floor and 5 of 25 from 3-point range. Dennis Schroder scored 23 points and hit four 3-pointers off Boston's bench.

Rookie Jalen Suggs had 17 points, six rebounds and five assists for Orlando.

Timberwolves 118, Pistons 105

In Minneapolis, Karl-Anthony Towns had 24 points and 12 rebounds and Minnesota beat Detroit for its fourth straight victory.

D'Angelo Russell returned with 22 points and eight assists after missing four games because of a left shin contusion. Michael Beasley had 20 points off the bench.

Saddiq Bey scored 24 points for Detroit. The Pistons have lost eight of nine.

Pelicans 120, Rockets 107

In Houston, Brandon Ingram scored 33 points and tied a career high with 12 assists in New Orleans's victory over Houston.

New Orleans has won three in a row, and Houston has lost six of seven.

Christian Wood had 22 points for Houston.

Cavs pull off another stunner, acquire LeVert from Pacers

CLEVELAND (AP)—Caris LeVert exited the bus with his Indiana teammates and walked into Rocket Mortgage FieldHouse a visitor.

He can make himself at home.

On Sunday, the Cavaliers went from surprising contenders to serious ones.

Pulling off a major move ahead of this week's NBA trade deadline, Cleveland added another talented player to its young core by agreeing in principle to acquire LeVert, a talented swingman who can score from the Pacers.

"He can help put the ball in the hole," Cavs guard Rajon Rondo said. "He can erupt for 40 or 50 a night."

The Cavs are sending Ricky Rubio and his expiring $17.8 million contract, a lottery protected first-round draft pick in 2022 and two second-round picks to the Pacers for LeVert, a person familiar with the trade told The Associated Press.

Cleveland will also get a second-round pick in 2022, said the person who spoke on condition of anonymity because the teams have not yet participated in the required conference call with the league for approval.

The Cavs, who won just 22 games last season, have moved into playoff position and believe they can win the Eastern Conference title. They've been aggressively shopping for more backcourt help and a wing player after losing guards Collin Sexton and Rubio to season-ending injuries.

LeVert should more than help. The 27-year-old Ohio native averaged 18.7 points and 4.4 assists for the disappointing Pacers, who are 19-35 and already thinking about their future. LeVert scored 42 points Friday night against Chicago.

"He'll become a brother very quickly with those guys," said Pacers forward Justin Holiday, who rode to the arena with LeVert. "A serious competitor who wants to win."

The trade was completed about 90 minutes before the Cavs and Pacers tipped off. Indiana coach Rick Carlisle confirmed the agreement during his pregame news conference, which was slightly delayed so he could tell LeVert he'd been moved.

"Cleveland is in a great position, and adding a guy like Caris LeVert very well could push them to the top," Carlisle said. "Caris has been a tremendous young man to work with here.

"He's a very special person and a very special player. He's a first-class human being and a first-class pro and a tremendous player. I'm going to miss him."

The league's trading deadline is Thursday, and it's not out of the question that the Cavs and Pacers may each made another move. In the short-term, the LeVert deal is a potential season-changer for Cleveland.

The Cavs entered Sunday just 1 1/2 games behind the Bulls for the top spot in the East. It's been a stunning ascent for a young Cleveland team that wasn't expected to do much this season but has overcome injuries and developed quickly.

LeVert got a sense of what he's joining as the Cavs fell behind by 20 to the Pacers before staging their biggest rally this season for a 98-85 win.

"Guys understand this is a really good team and don't take this opportunity for granted," said Rondo, a two-time NBA champion. "We've got a chance to do something special."

LeVert will likely slide into the starting backcourt alongside All-Star Darius Garland, who has been slowed by a sore lower back lately. He'll also give coach J.B. Bickerstaff another scoring option and a perimeter player capable of driving to the rim — something the Cavs have long needed.

"He and Garland in the backcourt is really dynamic," Carlisle said. "These guys have improved a great deal today."

After losing Rubio to a season-ending knee injury, the Cavs acquired Rondo but have always had their eyes on LeVert, a proven scorer and playmaker. LeVert signed a thee-year, $52 million contract with Brooklyn in 2020.

While he's been the subject of trade rumors for weeks, LeVert arrived for Sunday's game unaware the he would soon by changing jerseys, taking a huge jump in the standings and likely headed to the playoffs.

"We have a unique understanding here with our front office and players, where if a deal gets close, we will talk to the player so he doesn't see it on social media or somewhere else," Carlisle said. "We did that with Caris in my office, and (general manager) Chad (Buchanan) on a speaker with us."

In Cleveland, LeVert will be reunited with former Brooklyn teammate Jarrett Allen, who has developed into one of the league's best young centers since being acquired in the deal that sent James Harden from Houston to the Nets. LeVert was also part of that trade.

The Pacers appear to be in the early stages of a major roster overhaul. Forwards Domantas Sabonis and Myles Turner could possibly move in the days ahead.

"This is league is a business," Holiday said, "and right now it's that time."

Herbert, Crosby send AFC to 41-35 win in Pro Bowl's return

LAS VEGAS (AP) — From Darius Leonard's rambling pick-6 on the opening drive to Mac Jones' blissfully enthusiastic Griddy dance at the 2-minute warning, the Pro Bowl's Vegas debut was a messy, chaotic show.

And Justin Herbert, Maxx Crosby and the AFC stars all won big.

Herbert hit Mark Andrews with two touchdown passes, leading the AFC to a 41-35 victory over the NFC on Sunday in the return of the Pro Bowl.

"I think it's a great opportunity to come out here and play some of the best football players this game has to offer," Herbert said. "What an opportunity to learn more about their game, understand them, get to know them and just have some fun."

Jones passed for 112 yards and threw a touchdown pass, and the New England rookie also did a memorable rendition of the Griddy in the first Las Vegas edition of the NFL's annual All-Star game, back from a one-year hiatus caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

Herbert won the offensive MVP award after passing for 98 yards and finding the Baltimore tight end for two TDs in the first half of the Los Angeles Chargers star's first Pro Bowl appearance. Andrews had five catches for 82 yards.

Crosby, from the hometown Raiders, won the defensive MVP award with two sacks, three batted passes and three tackles for loss in a pleasingly sloppy game featuring seven interceptions, with at least one thrown by each of the six quarterbacks.

"I didn't want to injure or hurt anybody, but I still wanted to have some fun and work on my game," Crosby said. "No matter what it is, we're still in full pads and want to have a little bit of fun."

The AFC has won five consecutive Pro Bowls since the league returned to a conference format in the 2016-17 season. Its players took home $80,000 apiece from Vegas, while the NFC got $40,000.

Kyler Murray passed for 160 yards and three touchdowns for the NFC. The Arizona star made it close when he hit Minnesota's Dalvin Cook for a TD with 2:36 to play, trimming the AFC's lead to six points.

Jones then got stopped on a scramble in the waning minutes, but kept running about 55 more yards to the end zone and celebrated alone with the Griddy, pioneered by Minnesota's Justin Jefferson. After learning his celebration was premature, Jones hit Pittsburgh's Najee Harris for a first down on the next play to allow the AFC to run out the clock.

The Pro Bowl moved to Las Vegas for the first time after a four-year run in Orlando, and a less-than-capacity crowd at Allegiant Stadium mostly cheered for the Raiders and booed their AFC West rivals. Otherwise there was a decidedly mellow vibe on the field from the moment Leonard returned an interception 45 rambling yards for a TD.

Both teams treated the Pro Bowl with all the seriousness it deserves: Tackling to the ground was rare while both teams effectively played two-hand touch, and neither defense put up more than a perfunctory pass rush.

The informal rules to prevent excessive violence were also quite flexible: Tampa Bay's Antoine Winfield returned an interception 63 yards for a score to end the first quarter, but only after running through a pretty clear two-hand touch from Las Vegas' Hunter Renfrow.

Renfrow got the day's biggest single cheer when he made a tip-toe TD grab in the back of the end zone.

AP

AFC tackle Mark Andrews (89), of the Baltimore Ravens, reacts with wide receiver Stefon Diggs (14), of the Buffalo Bills, and wide receiver Tyreek Hill (10), of the Kansas City Chiefs, after Andrews scored a touchdown in the first half of the Pro Bowl NFL football game against the NFC, Sunday, Feb. 6, 2022, in Las Vegas.

CAN'T KICK IT

In another attempt at violence-reducing innovation, the Pro Bowl was played with no kickoffs. The game started with the NFC offense on its own 15 in the so-called "spot and choose" method of eliminating dangerous kickoffs from football. The winner of the opening coin toss has the option to choose where to spot the ball on the field or whether to start the game with the ball.

Neither Pro Bowl punter got to play, either. AFC coach Mike Vrabel told Las Vegas' AJ Cole earlier in the week that the team wouldn't be punting — so Cole said he ate two hot dogs at halftime.

"I'm just here for moral support, basically," Cole said. "Just passing out water and high-fives."

WISH I WAS A BALLER

Tampa Bay's Mike Evans went up and over the Raiders' Denzel Perryman for a 19-yard TD catch in the first half. Perryman then went into the locker room at halftime and tweeted: "Lol i know i know, only if i was taller."

BROTHERS GOTTA HUG

Buffalo receiver Stefon Diggs got to go against his little brother, Dallas cornerback Trevon Diggs, for the first time as professionals. Stefon even switched to defensive back when Trevon came in as a receiver for the NFC in the first half, and Stefon got credit for a pass breakup in the end zone after a good bit of hand-fighting between the brothers.

Stefon called checkmate when he juked Trevon to the ground at the goal line on a TD run in the third quarter.

AMERICA'S PLAYGROUND

The stars seemed to enjoy Vegas, even if many didn't hit the casinos. New Orleans' Cameron Jordan spent the week at various attractions with his wife and children.

"It's been a setup that, with some tweaking, can be phenomenal," the seven-time Pro Bowl selection said. "Sensational, even."

The Pro Bowl will be followed to Vegas by the NFL draft in April. Super Bowl 58 will be here Feb. 11, 2024.

THE ABSENT GOAT

Tom Brady ended his NFL career by not participating in the final 13 Pro Bowls for which he was selected, including this season. The seven-time champion quarterback hasn't played in a Pro Bowl since 2005.

Dolphins hire Mike McDaniel as head coach

By JOSH DUBOW
AP PRO FOOTBALL WRITER

The Miami Dolphins hired San Francisco 49ers offensive coordinator Mike McDaniel as their head coach Sunday, making him the first minority candidate to get hired so far this offseason.

McDaniel, who is biracial, replaces Brian Flores, who was fired despite posting winning records in the final two of his three seasons in Miami.

Flores sued the NFL, the Dolphins and two other teams last week over alleged racist hiring practices for coaches and general managers, saying the league remains "rife with racism" even as it publicly condemns it.

McDaniel had worked under 49ers coach Kyle Shanahan for the past 11 seasons and gets his first shot as a head coach after only one year as offensive coordinator.

McDaniel was credited for his role in developing San Francisco's creative running game that featured receiver Deebo Samuel as a running back at times, along with other wrinkles.

"Mike is awesome," 49ers quarterback Jimmy Garoppolo said last month. "He really is. He's kind of that, I don't want to say the mastermind behind everything, but he's kind of that guy in the background that doesn't say a whole ton to a lot of people, but his mind is always moving. The ideas that he comes up with are so fresh and new that it's a cool guy to have on the staff. ...

"He's a lot smarter than most of us. So he dumbs it down for us and kind of gets us all on the same page."

McDaniel could bring some of those wrinkles to Miami to feature playmaking receiver Jaylen Waddle in even more creative ways,

The Dolphins struggled offensively this season despite finishing 9-8 in a roller-coaster campaign that featured a seven-game losing streak followed by a seven-game winning streak.

Second-year quarterback Tua Tagovailoa struggled at times and Miami ranked 22nd in the league in scoring this season.

The 49ers had a much more productive offense despite also having a quarterback with limitations in Garoppolo.

The Yale-educated McDaniel got his coaching start on Mike Shanahan's staff in Denver in 2005. He worked an offensive assistant in Houston for in 2006-08 when Kyle Shanahan was on that staff. McDaniel then worked in Washington for three years with Mike Shanahan as coach and Kyle Shanahan as offensive coordinator before working under Kyle Shanahan when he was a coordinator in Cleveland and Atlanta.

McDaniel then joined Shanahan's staff in San Francisco in 2017 as run game coordinator and took over the offensive coordinator role this past season.

The Dolphins' hiring of McDaniel followed some paths the team has used in the past, most notably how he is yet another first-time NFL head coach.

McDaniel becomes the 10th consecutive hire by the Dolphins to have exactly zero previous games as the person in charge of an NFL sideline, following Jim Bates, Nick Saban, Cam Cameron, Tony Sparano, Todd Bowles, Joe Philbin, Dan Campbell, Adam Gase and Flores. Bates, Bowles and Campbell were all interim hires.

Of those, including McDaniel, six have come during Ross' ownership.

And all of those moves have come in the last 18 years, starting with the firing of Dave Wannstedt and Bates being put into place nine games into the 2004 season.

The Dolphins haven't won a playoff game since 2000 for the second-longest active drought in the NFL to the Detroit Lions.

The hiring of McDaniel leaves the NFL with four minority head coaches with openings remaining in Houston and New Orleans. Pittsburgh's Mike Tomlin, Robert Saleh of the Jets and Washington's Ron Rivera are the others.

The 49ers will receive two extra third-round picks the next two years as compensation for developing a minority head coach.

Valieva makes history as Russians win team gold

BEIJING (AP)—Kamila Valieva walked almost tentatively through Capital Indoor Stadium, juggling her pink-cased cellphone, her ice skates with the fuzzy pink blade guards and the stuffed mascot of the Beijing Games, Bing Dwen Dwen.

Then they all fell in a pile on the floor.

She managed to keep it together better on the ice, where the 15-year-old Russian sensation became the first woman to land a quad in the Olympics — two, in fact. They came during Valieva's historic free skate inside a historic arena and helped the Russians cap a dominant run to the gold medal in the team event to open the figure skating program.

"I do feel this burden a bit, this pressure, because this is my first season among adult skaters," Valieva said. "I believe that I'm coping with this pressure, and sometimes it even pushes me forward. It helps me."

How much farther can she go?

Valieva opened with a huge quad salchow and followed with the difficult triple axel before landing another quad, this time a toe loop in combination with a triple toe loop. The only blemish on her program came when she fell on her quad toe loop late in the program, but by that point, her first gold medal in Beijing was assured.

AP

Kamila Valieva, of the Russian Olympic Committee, competes in the women's team free skate program during the figure skating competition at the 2022 Winter Olympics, Monday, Feb. 7, 2022, in Beijing.

Another one could come shortly in the individual event, where the Russians are favored to sweep the podium.

"I'm very happy that the most part of my planned program worked out well," she said.

The Russians finished with 74 points in the team event to win their second gold medal in three editions of it. The U.S. earned the silver after back-to-back bronze medals at the past two Olympics, thanks largely to a winning dance program from Madison Chock and Evan Bates, while Japan climbed onto the team podium for the first time.

The celebration by Team USA was tempered by word shortly before the awards ceremony that Vincent Zhou had tested positive for COVID-19 after his free skate Sunday. Zhou was being tested again Monday and needed to return a negative result or he would miss the start of the men's competition.

The news was especially stressful for Olympic teammate Nathan Chen, whose highly anticipated quest for individual gold begins with Tuesday's short program. The two have been part of the same practice group in Beijing.

"We basically said: 'Vincent, we're sorry to hear the news. We miss you. We wish you were here because you're a big part of this team. You helped earn the silver medal," Bates said after filming a video for him. "And we're just hoping for the best and that he'll be all cleared and be able to take part in his individual event."

The Americans were the talk of Capital Indoor Stadium after Day 1, when Chen won the men's short program, ice dancers Madison Hubbell and Zachary Donohue earned the highest score in their discipline and the pairs duo of Alexa Knierim and Brandon Frazier finished third with one of their best short programs.

Valieva wiped out their hard-earned lead all by herself Sunday, then the Russian team began pulling away.

Anastasia Mishina and Aleksandr Galliamov, the reigning world champs, took maximum points in pairs to begin the final day of the team event, even though they inexplicably collapsed to the ice on their final lift. And their ice dancers, Victoria Sinitsina and Nikita Katsalapov, finished second to Chock and Bates to clinch the gold medal.

That left no pressure on Valieva to unload the first quad — and the second — by a woman in Olympic competition.

"Everyone accomplished our programs in the best way possible," Katsalapov said, "so what can I say?"

The only controversy, both in Russia and abroad, was the team's decision to use the same lineup throughout the event. Two substitutions are allowed and only those who skate earn a medal, leaving some to suggest that Russian teammates Anna Shcherbakova or Alexandra Trusova deserved an opportunity to perform their free skate.

DANGOL

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the COVID-19 pandemic.

"But in the meet I did right before I turned 13, I placed eighth in the nation in 400 IM for 12-year-olds and 99th all time for the 11-12 age group. I also placed 13th in the nation for the 200m fly in the 11-12 age group. Now that I am 13, I am not ranked nearly as high for the 13-14 age group, but I am working my way up."

Dangol recently qualified for a meet called Sectionals, which is a meet with very few 13-year-olds.

"It was in LA, and I went for a team relay. While there, I qualified for the 200m butterfly, missed the 400m IM by 0.5 seconds, and nearly qualified in the 200 breast. On the weekend of the 29th, I went to a zone swim meet and was the top qualifier for an all-star team," he said.

Dangol thanked his parents and sister, Tsunami Saipan coach Hiroyuki Kimura, and all the teammates he swam with for all the success he's so far achieved in the sport.

"I would like to dedicate my progress to everybody who helped me get here. They all played a part in my swimming."

Dangol followed his sister Ashley when she picked swimming as the sport she wanted to learn growing up on Saipan.

"She started to swim at a young age, and being the younger brother that I am, I followed suit. Now, eight years later, I love the sport that I do, and can't think of what I would be without it."

He said Kimura definitely gave him a great start in swimming, especially in hard events like the 400m IM.

"The hard practices there and then the technique work here made me a strong swimmer who is now improving my strokes, which I think is really good. However, while swimming on Saipan, I was taught a lot more than just how to swim. Coach Hiro taught me how to be punctual, taught me dedication, taught me about hard work, and helped me become me. I got to experience things I'll never experience here like meets in Japan or swimming around tanks in the ocean. Tsunami Saipan showed me how a team can come together, be loud, fun, exciting, and have teammates who push each other."

Dangol currently trains eight times a week at the Albany Aquatic Center in Albany, California. There, the practices are technique-based and workouts are focused on strokes.

"We have dry land twice a week and have goal-setting once a week. Goal-setting is where you set goals and talk about how you should swim your races."

Asked what he misses most about Saipan, Dangol's reply is: "Its simplicity, my friends, and just Saipan in general. When I can, I would want to go back and visit Saipan. I can't pick one specific thing I miss most, I miss everything from the banana trees to my friends."

JEROME

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because the fundamentals of Roccball is different from volleyball. To me Roccball is more competitive. I feel very proud of myself to win such award. My years of hard work are finally paying off."

In last week's games, Team Nakama defeated team Redacted in an overtime set. In that game, Redacted players scored 13 2-point aces and two 2-point backcourt plays. The Nakama players scored three aces and two 3-point goals. In the aforementioned game between San Jose and Laly 4 that Manzon starred, San Jose scored 10 2-point aces, a 2-point xunk, and four 3-point goals. A total of five teams are competing in the 2022 season.

Feger said Roccball is the sport that is known as a revolution on collocated courts. Formerly identified as Rocball, Saipan's own sport, it's the first sport to include 3-point scoring, unrestricted hitting/kicking, and rally point scoring before the team net sports of basketball and volleyball adopted these creative forms of competition in the late 1980s and mid-1990s.

In international Roccball news, Rajender S. Ahlawat has been named president of the Roccball Amateur Federation of India for another five years. Under his leadership, Roccball associations have been established in all 22 states of India. Ahlawat is also the president of the Asian Roccball Confederation and will oversee the development of Roccball in Asia. The Roccball headquarters for Asia will be in Delhi, India.

SPORTS

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championship round this Saturday at the Chacha Oceanview Middle School field. The middle school volleyball, on the other hand, is just halfway through its season, while the IT&E Interscholastic Girls and Boys High School Basketball League just had its second week of action last Jan. 26. The TakeCare Interscholastic Badminton League opened its middle school competition last Jan. 29 and before the indefinite suspension, the organizing Northern Marianas Badminton Association is schedule to kick off the high school event on Feb. 19.

The Northern Mariana Islands Basketball Federation, which oversees the interscholastic hoops program, supports the CNMI PSS Athletics Program and the PSS leadership's decision for the safety of everyone.

"It is unfortunate to suspend the game, however safety for all is always the NMIBF and PSS' top priority. In today's sports world, because of COVID, this has become the 'new norm' where we, the organizers, constantly have to modify base on the situation while the coaches and athletes have to adapt to the changes just as quickly. On behalf of NMIBF, I want to thank the fans, our sponsor IT&E, and everyone involved in the program for being patient and understanding," NMIBF president James Lee said.

NMBA president Merlie Tolentino, meanwhile, is encouraging student-athletes to keep practicing at home and stay active to get ready for the resumption of the interscholastic programs. She also calls on everyone to observe safety protocols, practice the Ws (wear a mask, wash your hands, and watch your distance) to help protect themselves, their family, the elderly, and those more at risk individuals from the severe effects of the COVID-19.

In last week's lone game in the boys middle school volleyball at the Marianas High School Gymnasium, Hopwood Middle School I managed to outlast Dandan Middle School, 14-21, 23-21, 15-13.

MIKE CINCO PASCUAL

Hopwood Middle School 1 in action against Dandan Middle School in the NMIVA-PSS Interscholastic Middle School Volleyball League 2021-2022 last Thursday at the Marianas High School Gymnasium.

Joel Embiid scores 40 points, 76ers hold off DeRozan, Bulls

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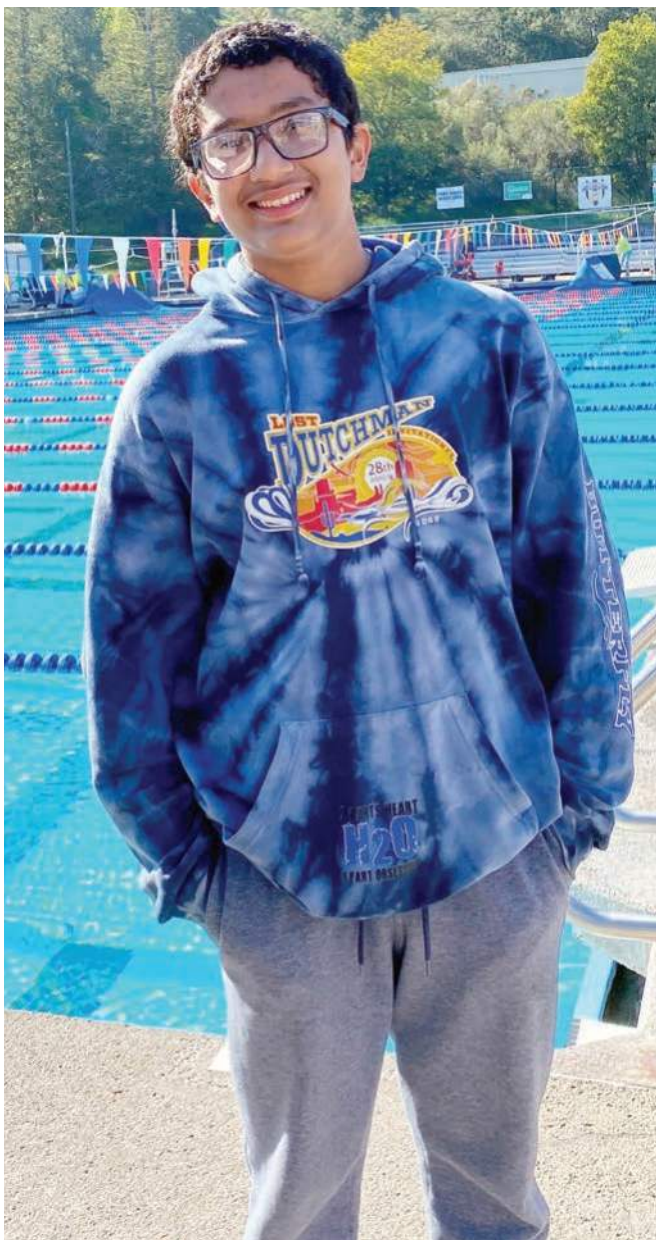
Dangol makes it to USA Junior Rankings

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Aasish Dangol in action while swimming for Albany Armada Aquatics, LLC.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Aasish Dangol said he misses everything on Saipan from the banana trees to his friends.

By MARK RABAGO
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ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Former Saipan resident Aasish Dangol made it to the USA Swimming Junior Rankings and was previously currently No. 8 in the 12-and-under age group.

Currently swimming for the Albany Armada Aquatics, LLC, the now 13-year-old finished eighth in the SCY 400m individual medley of the 2021 PC AAA Intrasquad Distance Day with a time of 4:26:36 to get his national ranking.

Dangol, who like his older sister Ashley used to swim for Tsunami Saipan Swimming Center, didnt make a big deal out of being nationally ranked.

"I'm not really sure how it feels to be 'nationally ranked.' I didn't gain any fame or anything. I feel the same, the only difference it made was that now I want to push myself harder to rank higher and in more events," he said.

Dangol said on the lead up to the 2021 PC AAA Intrasquad Distance Day, he wasn't able to join many swimming meets because of

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Interscholastic sports programs on hold

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

Sports events under the CNMI Public School System Athletics Program have been suspended indefinitely due to the recent surge in COVID-19 cases in the community.

CNMI PSS Athletics Program director Nick Gross, in a notice sent to schools and sports federations, said the temporary suspension is part of their efforts to assist the community in navigating these incredibly difficult times. The CNMI recorded 577 COVID-19 cases from Feb. 2 to 4.

Affected programs include the girls and boys middle school volleyball, girls and boys high school basketball, co-ed elementary volleyball, co-ed middle and high school badminton, co-ed high school outrigger, and swim for life/swim for all.

"We will assess the situation and make plans with our federation partners to safely resume competitions as soon as possible, with the understanding that things/pans may change at any time," Gross said.

The co-ed elementary volleyball was scheduled to have its final regular season games last Saturday and is originally slated to have its

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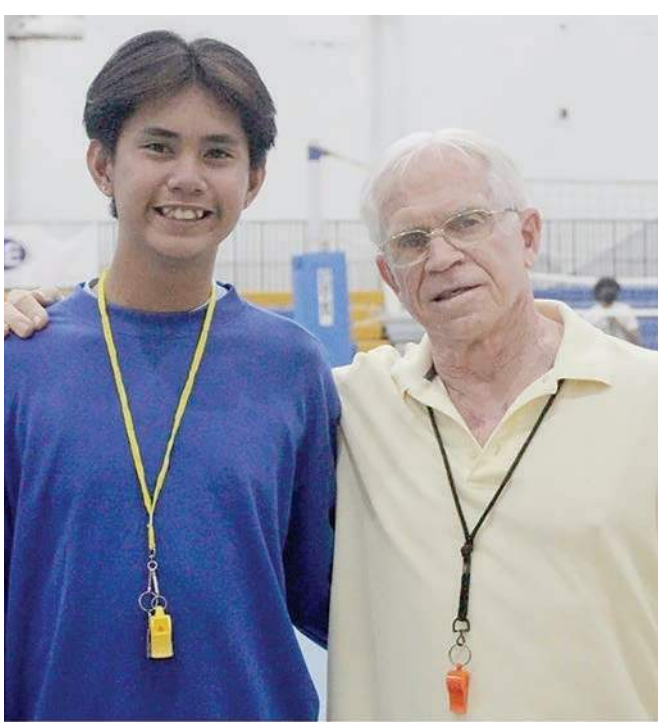
Jerome Manzon is Roccball heavy hitter



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

San Jose's Jerome Manzon, left, poses with Rocball/Roccball founder James Feger after one of the matches they officiated at the Marianas High School Gymnasium.

By MARK RABAGO
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ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Marianas High School freshman Jerome Manzon was named the 2022 Micronesian Roccball Championship's very first heavy hitter after leading San Jose to a win over Laly 4 last week at the MHS Gymnasium.

In addition to several 1-point court types scoring, the 14-year-old from Gualo Rai also scored four 2-point aces and four 3-point goals. Manzon is not only an up-and-coming premier Roccball player, as according to Roccball founder James Feger, he also helps with officiating in games when his team is not playing.

Manzon said it took him a while to get the hang of Roccball after excelling in volleyball most of his life.

"Nothing changed much on my perspective to playing Roccball. It is very similar to volleyball but very different at the same time. I noticed two main differences that volleyball and Roccball differ on. One is the five-touch rule and the serve receive two-touch rule. I had a bit of a confusion on this adjustment because it is a major change to what rule I usually play," he said.

Manzon said another facet of Roccball that took a while to adjusting to was the point system.

"It's very different from volleyball because you have all these new points from scoring an ace or a zunk to scoring a goal. I was quite surprised that I have excelled right away

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